

THE  
LETTERS OF  
Pope Celestine  
VI  
TO ALL MANKIND

~~Brown~~

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The letters of

Pope Celestine VI

to all mankind

282 P21L

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THE LETTERS OF POPE CELESTINE VI

*BY GIOVANNI PAPINI*

LIFE OF CHRIST • MEMOIRS OF GOD  
PRAYER TO CHRIST • FAILURE  
LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD  
LIFE AND MYSELF • ST. AUGUSTINE  
THE LETTERS OF POPE CELESTINE VI  
THE LIFE OF MICHELANGELO  
*(in preparation)*

THE LETTERS OF  
POPE CELESTINE VI  
TO ALL MANKIND

By GIOVANNI PAPINI

*Translated from the Italian by*

LORETTA MURNANE

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"So shall the last be first, and the first last."

*Matthew 20:16*

"To whom he said: I say to you, that if these shall  
hold their peace, the stones will cry out."

*Luke 19:40*





## PREFACE

IT IS *not necessary here to relate again the life of Pope Celestine VI. The pages of history that are dedicated to him are refulgent pages flashing brilliantly against the dark and gloomy background of his era. In the judgment of his contemporaries and of later historians, he was one of the greatest Popes who ever wore upon his head the Crown of the Three Kingdoms. He bequeathed to us the memory of a Pope loving and wise, steadfast in his faith, so courageous in his defense of truth that at times, to the eyes of the timid, he seemed almost reckless. He was ardent, eloquent, and daring, ever aflame with the golden fire of Christ. His only fault, and upon this with rare accord both his adversaries and his counsellors agreed, was his excessive simplicity and candor of heart. As is well known, he died a martyr during the last days of the Great Persecution.*

*I discovered these Letters, which are now translated and published for the first time, by chance in an old manuscript in an ancient, abandoned convent; they were buried beneath a mass of writings that had escaped the notice and research of historians. I have carried out the translation, an almost completely literal one, with the utmost care, although the Latin text had not a few gaps because of torn pages, and many words that were almost illegible.*

*Celestine VI lived in a terrible era of storm and blood—not unlike the one in which we are living—when it seemed as though Satan, the “prince of this world,” was exerting the extreme might of his power to precipitate mankind to homicidal desperation and to the destruction of all that sustains*

## THE LETTERS OF POPE CELESTINE VI

*and illumines life. It seemed then, as it does today, that men, shaken and convulsed by terrific storms of dark insanity, had forgotten or denied every sense of justice, every impulse of love. But Celestine was not silent, and did not allow himself to be overcome by the temptations of that shame that too often disguises itself with the honest name of prudence. He spoke openly; he spoke to all men, not only to those who accepted him as the Vicar of Christ. From his great heart, he hurled his words like arrows of light into the hearts of all men.*

*Hence, these Letters, which so completely reveal the generous and impetuous spirit of the Confessor-Martyr Pope, can be also to us illuminating, guiding, heartening, moving, affecting, and rekindling. They are not directed only to Christians, but to all men, of every condition, of all nations, and, in particular, to those who ponder and suffer, to all those who long for salvation through a Christian super-humanity.*

GIOVANNI PAPINI

*PART I*

*THE LETTERS OF POPE CELESTINE VI*



## CHAPTER I

### TO THE PEOPLE WHO CALL THEMSELVES CHRISTIAN

*My brothers,*

*my sons,*

I CAN be silent no longer. Already I have waited too long. The infinite sorrow of the world curdles and ferments in my paternal heart and bids me give voice to its utterance. If he who is the representative of Christ on earth does not speak, who then shall speak?

I hear murmurings, whispers, arguments, cries, ravings, but nowhere do I hear one word that issues from the pure light of the spirit, that flows from the warm blood of the heart.

Already I have waited too long. I blush that I have delayed until today. The weight of old age, the burden of anxiety, the little delays from too great a human caution, the obstacles of that reason which in Apocalyptic times is patent stupidity in the eyes of God, the fear of being misunderstood—these are not enough to condone my procrastination.

I have suffered, and am suffering; I have been in anguish, and I am in anguish because of the passions of men. My nights are sleepless, my days have forgotten hunger, my lips no longer know how to smile. In the silence of my palace, I have listened, trembling, to the sighs, groans, convulsive sobbings, outcries, shrieks, and even the blasphemies of all the

wretched, tormented souls persecuted and dying in all the lands and on all the seas. But of what avail are my daily, solitary tears to the lacerated, the amputated, the despoiled, the poisoned, the bereft?

Humanity is confounded, confused, almost upside down, and entombed. And, however unworthy, should the viceroy of Him who shed His blood for the salvation of men remain silent? I am nothing now but a meager instrument of bone covered by scant flesh and withered skin; I have no other patrimony than a bleeding heart; no other weapon than my shepherd's staff, and my voice that is weakened by the years and by anguish. But I must speak; it is my duty, and I will speak. I speak first of all to you who call and believe yourselves Christians—but my words are addressed as well to all men, even to those who do not acknowledge my authority as the Vicar of Christ—even to those who do not know and who deny our God. I shall speak with strength and vigor as the Father inspires me, as the Son directs me, and as the Holy Ghost commands me—as love and pity compel me. May my words have the persuasiveness of a May morning breeze, but, when necessary, the power of thunder resounding in the mountains at night; may they fall upon the spirit as sweet, refreshing drops, but remain in the memory in letters of fire. I know that I am only a man weak among men; but, united to God, I shall be a giant capable of sounding a clarion call to the utmost ends of the planet.

Oh Christians, you know what is the torment and martyrdom of the human family. For many years mankind has been in the grip of rabid fits of suicidal fury, alternating between maniacal destruction and debilitating desperation. Man seems like a Titan bellowing in the flaming folds of the Cen-

taur's tunic. He has created a gigantic and horrendous blood bath; but even this vast crimson flood has not been able to extinguish the flames of fury.

Wars, revolutions, defeats, pestilence; hunger for supremacy, slaughter, and bread, have decimated humanity without curing it. More than once, along the road of history, a road beset with mire and blood, there have been men who believed they could hear the pawings of the hoofs of the Apocalyptic horses. Never, I believe, has the mouth of Death come so close to feed amid the pallid grasses that spring from ruin. Of the three floods necessary to the world, only the last is lacking. The first, of the Father, was the deluge of punishing waters; the second, of the Son, was the purifying blood; the third, of the Holy Ghost, will be of fire. Already we have seen the erosive, consuming fire descend upon us from the skies—now we await the sublime and healing fire of the Holy Ghost. But humanity in expectation is but a frightened, restless invalid—covered by ulcers of horror, the dust of catastrophes, the livid scars of torture, the patched cloak of discord.

Millions of bodies rot beneath the dung of battlefields or in the invisible graveyards in the depths of the sea; millions of bodies lie putrefying under ruined walls, in improvised trenches; millions of victims of famine, of torture and disease are thrown to the worms before their time—millions of prisoners are incarcerated like sheep, without names, within walls of iron and stone; millions of slaves, exiled from their loved ones, sweat for bread in lonely lands; millions of fugitives, humiliated and pursued, are still roaming in search of a roof now destroyed; millions of orphans, widows, fathers, and mothers wait in vain for those who will never return; millions of famished souls daily wage their humiliating bat-

tle, not always victoriously, against death; millions of human vampires take advantage of the universal upheaval and disorder to add misery to the already miserable, and fear to the terrified; millions of women are prostituting or debasing themselves through destitution and the absence of loved ones; millions of hearts are melting or atrophying under the blows of anguish and nostalgia; millions of hearts are being poisoned by hateful brooding, by the slow dripping of rancor, by the urge of revenge; millions of minds are blinded in discouragement at unattainable peace; millions of souls have lost or are losing their faith in God's justice and in the humanity of man.

The military conflicts are followed by wars of rebellion and desperation, wars against one and against all, against themselves and against destiny; civil wars of brother against brother; wars of factions, of words, of accusation, of threats.

The smoke of battle dims only to reveal the lugubrious spectacle of ruins; the fury of the fire abates, but the stumps, blackened by fire, point to the sky; silent now are the roar and clangor of enormous destruction, but shrill and insistent are the voices of desolation, of revolt, and of madness.

Thousands of homes are heaps of stones and snake-pits; untold wealth has been dissipated, dispersed, withdrawn, and destroyed; magnificent cities and remote villages are mounds of litter, ashes, and filth; churches are reduced to rubble or latrines; schools to prisons or barracks; glorious monuments are now but chopped remains of barbaric mutilation. At least one third of the human race today is without certain shelter or sufficient food, without love and without honor, without strength and without hope.

The scourges in the material realm, although many and



tremendous, are as nothing compared to the wrenchings in the realm of the spirit.

Faith in Redemption falters even among the bravest; the multitude, forgetting the errors and sins of all, rise against God who permits such calamities or strikes with such force. Charity is practiced less by many, either because the great amount of evil frightens them or icy stubbornness of hearts restrains them, or the increasing ferocity of souls congeals them. Even reason—the supreme boast of man—seems overpowered in feverish delirium, clouded by frenzied hallucinations. No longer does reason dictate the speech of man—he speaks from his lower and physical organs. Heard instead are the rumblings in his stomach, the bile in his liver, the uterine furors, the overheating of his blood. Only passion and carnal cravings speak forth—class and caste interests, factional and race pride. Measured and meditative language has become the belchings of insanity, expectorations of resentment. Men are united only in hate and the exploits of death. In all else they are divided, separated, opposed, hostile; continent against continent, faith against faith, nation against nation, tribe against tribe, man against man.

There is no longer the curb of conscience nor the dam of the law. He who has the strength, robs; he who has firearms, kills; he who is confident of impunity, extorts and defrauds. There is no criterion but profit—no other idol but money, no other morals save those of wolves, no codes but those of vultures.

Even in those countries we call Christian, the Gospel is no longer supreme, but there reigns a Satanic doctrine, that so far no one has dared openly to expose in the form of dictates and commandments, although it is practiced by everyone

with arrogant docility. Such an occult faith is not eager to disclose its name—let us call it Arimanism. Like our faith, it has a most venerated Trinity: Moloch, Mammon, and Priapus. Some would add a fourth—Belfagor, the demon of intellectual confusion. In spite of its indisputable triumph, Arimanism does not give happiness to its followers. Because of its very Satanic origin, it resolves itself in a paradox which, through a supreme jest, results in tragedy.

Men desire to enjoy themselves, and in an attempt to increase their enjoyment, they wage war; and the wars, outer and inner, infinitely increase their suffering.

Men crave riches, and with the hope of wealth, wage war; and in so doing not only destroy the wealth they already possess, but condemn themselves to even harsher misery.

Men want to dominate, and with the desire for greater dominion they wage war; but the exigencies of war increase slavery—slavery already heavy, of all the citizens, of the victorious no less than the vanquished.

Then men say they wish peace, peace for all, peace forever; but the leaders, in order to impose this peace, know only how to rearm even more, know only how to threaten new and more horrible wars.

Such is the frightful retribution of Arimanism, that finds a thousand confirmations in the history of our days. The people who wanted more bread are reduced to hunger, those who wanted to lead are last, those who dream of the illusion of conquest find themselves with less freedom, less wealth, less power than before.

The shameful and ruinous bankruptcy of Arimanism demonstrates, in the light of truth, what is the primary cause of the agony of mankind: the repudiation and betrayal of the

## TO THE PEOPLE WHO CALL THEMSELVES CHRISTIAN

Gospel. There is no necessity to proclaim with the sound of words the superiority of Christianity, nor is it even necessary to believe, as we believe, in its Divine origin. Everywhere, for all to see, history has pronounced its judgment, and has provided the most irrefutable evidence. Men have not accepted the Commandments of Christ; indeed, they have acted contrary to the meaning of the Gospel, they have rejected brotherhood, humility, and charity. And in so doing they have brought themselves to destruction, abandonment, frustration, and desperation. For the moment, any other proof is superfluous. Reality, not dogma, has spoken, and speaks with insistent clarity. The further you separate yourselves from Christ, the closer you approach the abyss.

Man loves himself too much, and mankind too little. Christianity has attempted to reverse human nature; it has taught us to despise ourselves and to love our enemies. Perhaps it demanded too much, but Divine Wisdom knew that one must aim at the mountain top in order to attain even a plateau among the hills. It would have been enough to diminish our self-love just a little, it would have been enough to diminish our hatred of our enemies even a little: life would have taken on another aspect, another meaning, another color. If man would have not attained the happiness, the bliss of the saints, at least he would have found peace among friends. The world would not now be so red with blood, so black with smoke, so festering with ruins, so parched with misery, so convulsed with disorder, so immersed in madness, so poor in hope, and so threatened with dissolution and annihilation. The denial of Christ has brought the world to the denial of joy, and to the threshold of catastrophe. The world can save itself only by moving toward Christ. Non-Christians

must become Christians; but in order to do that, Christians must become that which they are not, real Christians. And only then will there be a spiritual unity of men, a harmony of hearts, and peace on earth.

Let us transform ourselves that we may unite; this today must be our motto and our purpose; this, despite all obstacles, is the goal of my hope.

On whom shall rest the blame for this denial of the Gospel? The entire world is to blame, but in particular they who call and believe themselves Christians. The largest share of responsibility is ours, we who are followers of Christ and boast of our salvation by our baptism of water and blood.

My brothers, my sons, I have no desire to be unjust toward you; God knows my anguish and my paternal love. But the time has come to confess our sin, our dereliction, our desertion. We live too comfortably and complacently behind the stone walls of our church. We too readily believe, through ignorance or sloth, that it is enough to attend Mass, to follow the sacred Liturgy, to make an act of penitence every once in a while, to put a penny in the beggar's palm, to respect, through fear of imprisonment or fear of hell, three or four Commandments.

I say to you in truth: God demands of us, as Christians, a great deal more, infinitely more. I repeat to you that our Christianity only of form, habit, and convenience is not true Christianity, but a shadow, a mask, a foetus, an abortion of Christianity, a Christianity of weaklings, sluggards, of indifferent ones, hypocrites and baptized Pharisees.

God demands a great deal more from us. He wants our whole heart, all our thoughts and all our lives to be Christian. Christianity will be neither valid nor triumphant until

## TO THE PEOPLE WHO CALL THEMSELVES CHRISTIAN

it has embraced all nations, all men, until it has established the unity of all souls, the unity of all the living. We have forgotten that Christ sent us to win all people, and that the Kingdom of Heaven cannot transform the earth until all mankind accept His Truth and practice His Charity. Christianity must be completely believed, felt, suffered, and lived by all men. God will tolerate neither division nor waste. We are too few in the world, and often these few are only embryonic or counterfeit Christians. Hitherto Christianity has been more preached than lived, more name than substance, more façade than edifice, more flag-waving than victory. Although Christ died on the Cross centuries ago, we are in truth the first Christians, rough sketches, apprentices, Christians only in name and desire, undeveloped and immature.

Remember, brothers, that according to cold statistics, not sentiment, scarcely one quarter of humanity is ascribed to Christianity, and that not even this one quarter is united under one head, but broken into many churches, sects, and communions.

We are few and we are divided. We are few and we are negative, we are few and we are fearful. We live like a weary herd in somber sheepfolds of parishes, watched over by familiar bell-towers. God has commanded us to bring all men to Him, and we waste our lives with dry statistics of the number of the baptized, among whom the fire of zeal is rarer than pearls in the shells of the sea.

The Church of Peter, the Church of Rome, the Church under my jurisdiction calls itself "Catholic," which means universal, but it numbers among its members only perhaps half of the Christians on this earth. We are under the illusion that we are a victorious army, and in truth we are but a

meager, encircled advance guard, wherein abound the maimed, the sick, the unfit, the halt, the orphaned, and the ineffectual. If I were to scrutinize your inner hearts with a piercing eye, how many souls would I find worthy of the name Christian? If tomorrow a persecution more cruel than that of Decius and Diocletian were unleashed against us, how many of you would remain at my side ready to defend with your blood the faith in the blood of the Redeemer? Do not think that I want to place on all of you the blame which has already a beginning of expiation. I would not have the right to rebuke you, were I not prepared to take upon my priestly, pontifical shoulders my burden of penitence; were I not ready to recognize and confess the serious deficiencies of my Church. Just because it is the only legitimate one, the Roman Church should have directed all its power to the total possession and enlightenment of mankind. It has attempted this, especially in certain felicitous periods of its history, but has not done it enough. It has watched over its temporal existence, its internal administration, its theological defenses, the security of its servants and the obedience of its faithful; all necessary duties, but subordinate to other more vital needs. Too often it has been ensnared by the calculation of the powerful, instead of devoting itself completely to the redemption of the humble, the re-awakening of the indifferent, the reconversion of the strayed, the restoration of light to the unseeing. In order to defend itself against secular power, to protect itself against the arrogant obstinacy of heretics, to maintain discipline among its subjects, to sustain its almost imperial sovereignty, it has retarded its true impulse, it has mixed politics with its completely spiritual

mission, and seems often reduced to a community administrative government, merely supplying the Sacraments and diligently maintaining an enormous office crowded with clerks.

The Church has become transformed, a little because of its assailants, a little because of its own guardians, into a doctrinal, disciplinary, and liturgical fortress. It was necessary that this should be, but it is also necessary that it should also be as Christ wished, an army of nomads, invaders, and conquerors. It has erected a marvelous, gigantic basilica, admired even by its enemies, but its walls are so thick, its buttresses so solid, its pinnacles so fragile and slender, its labyrinths so intricate that the free breath of the wind does not always reach it, the warm message of the sun does not always penetrate. It has preserved by means of many shields and bastions the flame of the Gospels, but it has almost hidden it in the depths of its crypts where not many can see it, not many feel its heat, not many can nor want to be illuminated and lighted by it. God intended it to be a pyre on a mountain top, and we have scattered it, that divine flame, in so many tiny candles that smoke and sputter at the end of solemn, ancient naves, where many do not go. Yes, the Church contains the word of God; but to those outside, it would appear to contain it as a wrinkled parchment bears faded letters, the words that should instead blaze forth upon all mountain tops and in all minds.

I am not forgetting the innumerable works of temporal and spiritual charity that the Church can count, and of which it can be justly proud. But the greater portion of such endowments and foundations came into existence through the

inspiration of saints, the tenacity of the Orders, and the generosity of the laity. The heads of the Church approved these works, but did not originate them.

Nor do I forget the protection the Church has given to education and to the arts, which is not unbecoming to the Church, because everything in the world that is true and beautiful is, by natural and divine right, Christian. But the Church, for centuries, has not been able to draw to itself the greater vital force of the creative spirit, whether it be in thought or in the arts. For too long it has been content with architects, painters, sculptors, and writers who possess everything—good principles, good habits, good diplomas—everything, except genius.

The paramount glory of the Roman Pontiff cannot be restricted to the education of patrons of art, to the drafting of Papal Bulls, to the chronological register of decrees. This Apostolic Seat is the highest spiritual authority that the earth has known, but its entire strength consists in the fidelity to the task which God has assigned to it; namely, to lead men into living their lives in the spirit of the Gospel. All else, no matter how laudable it may seem to worldly eyes, is irrelevant and unworthy. Politics and administration, by reason of contingencies of times and nations, can be necessary also to the Church, but in the same way that a man must chew his food, or lower his eyelids in sleep—a necessity, but a necessity that is humiliating to him who lives for the spirit. The grandeur of a man does not consist in food nor sleep; indeed, the saints had as little as possible of either of them. The highest administrator of the Church should be, if he wishes to imitate Him whom he represents on earth, only a vigilant pastor and a conqueror of souls.



The most valid politics of the Church is the bettering of men, those very men who dedicate themselves or succumb to politics. To him who knows how to read it, history exhibits the clearest confirmation of this. Every time the ship of Peter has plunged into a sea of politics and smeared itself with pitch in the murky pools of civil affairs more than necessary, the less useful it has been to the people, and it has even been not a little harmful to the cohesion and ardor of the faithful. The more it knows how to keep itself outside of and above politics, the greater its influence will be on politics.

Among the Popes there have been some who were of the highest spirit, which inflamed and nourished Christianity, but still more numerous were those who did not demonstrate sufficient awareness of the supernatural destiny of the Church. Too often the Pontiffs, instead of being Vicars of God, eternally inspired and inspiring, were merely continuations of that too human Peter who wished to erect a tent on the Mount of the Transfiguration, not of the Peter impetuous and generous who first recognized in the homeless prophet the Son of God, but of that Peter who needed the look of the captured and the song of the cock to discover himself, of that Peter who would not keep vigil that last night in the Garden of Olives and who raised an ineffectual sword against a minor actor in the drama of the Redemption.

Too often the Papacy has been a slave: a slave to barbarians, a slave to emperors, a slave to *raison d'état*, which is the height of madness in the spiritual law, slave of worldly ambition, of pompous vanity, slave of patrician usurpers, of plebian merchants, slave of its protectors and of its servants, slave to diplomacy or demagoguery—slave, in short, of its bodily realization. The Popes should have been only witnesses of

the impatient Divinity, ardent captains for the conquering of nations, heroic defenders of the poor, the persecuted, and the mournful; they were too often sovereigns cloaked in icy majesty, nominal guardians of the pen-pushing congregations, jealous custodians of the letter of the law more than daring martyrs of its spirit. They were called to be Viceroyes of God, and sometimes they were content to be complacent overseers of an inherited and, for the most part, domesticated, herd; cautious guardians of a mediocre *status quo*. Christians, I ask your pardon for them.

And I also, with true humility, should ask you for forgiveness. I know I am your leader, and I am aware of the exalted dignity of my position. But I also have been, if not actually a worthless servant, a servant both slow and timid in carrying out the designs of the Most High. If He has placed me here in times so tempestuous for man and Christianity, it is a sign that more was expected of me than from all the others. But if I review the long years of my Papacy, sadness and doubt disturb me. I have prayed much, but I have not known how to increase in number the people entrusted to me. I have placed my trust in the ancient, sacred wisdom, but I have not been able to select from contemporary thinkers those who burned most silently and most clearly. I have sought for holiness in solitude, but I have not been able to abandon completely the sweetness of contemplation for the rough thickets of action. I have suffered for the sufferings of men; I have suffered, I have wept, I have bled before the flood of misfortunes that today submerge the world, but up to now I have not been able to find the bread that the Vicar of Christ should give to the hungry crowd wandering in the deserts of sterility and pain.

TO THE PEOPLE WHO CALL THEMSELVES CHRISTIAN

I am now old, broken, and exhausted, but I do not wish to seek in human weakness an excuse and absolution for my portion of the blame, I ask your pity, not your praise.

All is not yet completed. Before presenting myself with the weight of my misery at the seat of the Last Judgment, I wish to make one last effort, to accomplish one final task. I still have a heart that is moved by the fate of humankind; I still have a voice that is duty bound to recall to all the truth; I still have a desperate thirst for justice, and an infinite desire for love. From the depths of my torment and remorse, I will speak to all the living, near and far, to him who will listen, as well as to him who scoffs or flees.

I have only the living flame of my faith and the consuming fire of my sorrow. Christ will aid me so that my cry will reach the souls I would save with my words and with my blood.

Pope Celestine VI  
Servant of the servants of God

## CHAPTER II

### TO THE PRIESTS

*My brothers,*

*my sons,*

I DIRECT my words first of all to you, the priests of Christ. Heartfelt words of rebuke, indignation, incitement, but above all of affection. If, at times, they seem harsh to you, remember that they grieve me not only first, but more deeply than you.

Never believe that I am ignorant of your life, the sacrifice, the drama, the Calvary of your life. As you know, even I in my youth was entrusted to the care of souls, and I have not forgotten the temptations, the afflictions, and the derelictions that accompany, discount, and weigh heavy upon the grandeur and joy of our ministry. For us, more than for the ordinary Christians, how terribly true is the groan of Jesus: "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak."

Each one of us is a body of malleable clay nailed upon a cross of red-hot iron. Is it surprising that we attempt to extricate ourselves in order to seek a torment less cruel? The priest is the intermediary between man and God; between man who flees, and God who pursues, between reluctant man and God omnipotent, between man who moves backward, bent in his weakness, and God who requires all of him in the name of His tenacious and immense love.

More is demanded of us than from all others born of

woman. We are fashioned of blood and viscera, but we must be like angels. We live close to mud and slime, yet we must remain always pure in heart. We are deeply rooted in the earth, yet our discourse must be entirely in the heavens.

Among you there are some who succeed in preserving the pure essence of their vocation and know how to live, a clear and trembling shadow, in the immense, glittering shadow of God. But these are few, and even they are not spared the torments of the dark night of the spirit, of the spiritual drought that is sometimes resistant even to prayer.

But there are, unfortunately, those who live between the culpable resignation of laziness and awakenings not always followed by the bath of the second birth. I know the sadness of the lonely vigils, poorly consoled by nostalgia; the suggestions of the unquiet mind, the languor of the senses; the temptations of the noonday demon, the intolerance of youth, the indulgence of old age, the sinful invitations that attack the imagination, the allurements of comfortable communal living, the miseries of decadence and indigence; the revolt of the pride that, while not pampered, is not wholly tamed; the cowardly cunning that is born of habit.

I know and understand all these things, but I cannot forgive them all. Your responsibility is too great, brothers, and I am responsible for you all before God. To forgive all would be an offense against those who were entrusted to you. The lazy shepherd creates hungry sheep, the sleeping shepherd creates lost sheep, the corrupt shepherd creates sickly sheep, the unfaithful shepherd creates insane sheep. It is not only your own soul that each of you must account for to God and to me, but assuredly thousands of souls. Your tonsure will be stained not only with ashes, but with blood and tears; tears

and blood shed not by you, but that the many will shed because of your indolence and negligence.

I am distressed and sick at heart because of you, of many of you. Hitherto I have locked this lament within me, in order not to sadden you and in order not to nourish the malice of your enemies. But I can contain it no longer. The violence of love has wrenched it from my convulsed heart. Too often the just defense of the clergy against the mouthings of our enemies has become an excuse of the less worthy. The confession of the truth is the most valid answer to the exaggerations of our accusers. The stones with which we will beat our breasts are snatched from the hands of the throwers.

Forgive me, brothers, if, at times, I appear cruel to you. But the love I feel for the abandoned and famished multitudes is infinitely stronger than the pity I feel for you. You promised that which the others did not promise, you were given gifts, powers, charisms that the others have not. One must ask more of him who has promised more and received more.

Christ called you "the salt of the earth." Why, then, is the world still so insipid, so stupid; insipid almost to the point of vapidty, stupid to the point of imbecility? If the present wretchedness of mankind is a result of the abandonment of Christianity, of the non-Christianity of Christians, of the non-conversion of Christians, who, more than you, ought to assume the major burden of the blame?

And I cannot refrain from asking you: Do you truly believe in God? Do you really know Christ? Have you done your duty in all things? Have you always borne in mind, and have you accomplished, that which Christ asks of you, that which

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you swore to do, with your word and spirit, on the day of your ordination?

These are questions which choke in my throat, which fall on the pages wet with my tears. They are more sobs than questions, but the Lord would have the right to address them to me if I refused to address them to you. They are questions which may seem frightfully unjust to you, but they are nevertheless, inspired by the lives of many of you.

Tell me, in what way do you believe in God, in the living God who gave you life, who shed all the blood of his veins, all the sweat of his body, all the tears from his eyes, all the light of his words for the rebirth and transfiguration of all lives?

Oh, yes, you believe in God; you think you believe in God; every day you speak in His name. But of what God do you speak? Is it perhaps a notion of the mind, an abstract concept, an icy intellectual entity, accepted because of practical convenience, the habit of language, the tradition of the masters, accepted through obedience and convenience rather than because of an honest, tenacious faith, a fiery and reviving faith?

If, every day when you held in your hands the very body of the Divine Victim, your faith were rekindled, you would not so often be so distracted, so indifferent, so exhausted, so vague. Be as a fire, and all will approach to warm their hearts. Be intoxicated, and all will sing with you the song of liberty even in the fiery furnace. But your hands are not burning, your words are not afire, your eyes are not ablaze, and your faces have the gray and wan pallor of those who live under ground.

Consider for a moment, your unparalleled privilege. Every Christian can eat of the body of Christ, but you alone every morning drink of His blood, His limpid and fervid blood that redeemed even you with one of its drops. The blood, as the Scripture tells us, as you must know, is the spirit; the blood is wine transformed in a draft of intoxication and salvation. Why, then, are you so calm, so submissive, so reasonable, so frigid? Why does no one say of you the words the Hebrews said of the first disciples of Christ? <sup>1</sup>

Do you not know that only folly, the folly of the Cross, can bring back men to wisdom? Do you not know that only the incandescence of enthusiasm can warm the tepid, and make the paralytics walk?

Too many of you seem but simple clerks of the Church—ushers, beadles, writers, and bookkeepers—instead of apostles, sleepless, impatient, and imperious. Too many of you are somnolent and mechanical administrators of the sacraments instead of witnesses, confessors, and radiant examples of the truth which gushed forth from the lips of the Redeemer. You should be as living trees on the heights, refuges for the birds of the air, generous as leaves, flowers, fruit, and shade; and instead you are, more often than not, merely bare, smooth stakes, at times well varnished, but with no roots in the humus of humanity, giving forth neither buds nor blossoms; inferior wood, dead wood fit only to construct fences and barriers, to carry manifestoes of prohibition and regulation.

Many of you possess much: learning, forbearance, probity, immaculate habits, necessary respect for authority, the

<sup>1</sup> But others mocking, said: These men are full of new wine. Acts 2:13.



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desire for good. But you lack that which is more valuable and productive: the valiant generosity of the heart, the irresistible tyranny of love. Christ told you to be simple as doves and wise as serpents, but alas, you are doves that willingly relax in the warmth of their nests, serpents that willingly drowse in the closed air of their holes.

You are not always cold, but yet not warm enough to warm the benumbed. You have a tremendous fear of grandeur, a frenzied fear of religious fury. Your head is an archive of phrases learned by rote; your heart sometimes half stone and half oakum, your ears more alert to the whisperings of this world than to the voices of heaven. And of your love of ease, and your fear of death, I will say nothing.

Do you remember your ordination ceremony? At a certain moment you are prostrate on the floor, on your face, like serpents crawling on their bellies, to impress upon you, that only he who humbles himself will be exalted. There will come another day, when you will once again be prostrate in a grave, but this time supine, like drowned men. However, you are alive now and you should stand erect, tall and solid like columns, columns of fire to guide the people in the darkness of the wilderness.

I do not say, nor do I wish to say, that you neglect your duties. You celebrate Mass, preach the Gospel, baptize the children, bless marriages, comfort the sick, accompany the dead. But for a true priest of Christ, for an *alter Christus*, the supreme duty is above and beyond these ordinary and obligatory tasks. These are the ordinary administrations of peacetime, but the true Christian knows that there is never for him a time of peace. We are called to perennial battle:

for us not to fight is to die. Every generation emerges puerile and barbarous: we must initiate it and bring it to Christ before it perishes.

You are primogenitures of light, and your task is to be resplendent, to shine every day and for all. It is not enough for you to be good chancellors and secretaries of tradition, to be gentlemen respected and respectable. The Christianity of Christ, like poetry, does not tolerate mediocrity.

I suffer, not because of your corruption, but because of your mediocrity. Your life today is much purer than in other centuries. One could not write of you a "Book of Gomorrah," as did St. Peter Damian. The usurers, the fornicators, the sodomists, the simonists, the arch-heretics, have almost disappeared among you. Indeed, during my long journey, I recall having met young priests in whom the will to serve Christ shone luminously in a pallor of love, like a living flame behind an alabaster lamp. I recall having known aged priests venerated more for the light of their charity than for the whiteness of their locks; who were consumed in God, as the anonymous, glittering candle of the poor dissolves before the Most Holy. But I have also seen priests more impassioned by money or hunting than by their ministry, more eager for a good cook than a good name; more avid for politics or possessions than for watching over the salvation of their flocks, more expert in gossiping than in edifying. Many of them seemed, rather than like priests of Christ, like well-fed stewards, country squires, diligent solicitors of worldly affairs, narrow-minded bourgeois merchants who merely by chance happened to go into the spiritual life.

And of course there are also among you doctors, scholars, savants, pedants, those who know how to compose a sonnet

## TO THE PRIESTS

for the Bishop, who can draft the little speech for the First Communion, prepare the little manual of spiritual exercises, the monograph on the calendar of the diocese, the "scientific" tract crammed with "sound" principles, pregnant with "solid" doctrine. Some of you can preach sermons more flowery than the rectory garden; homilies more rich in unction than an olive-press, sermons more assiduously harmonious than a harmonium. At times from the pulpit you dispense orations so knowing with persuasive harmony of voice that your own ears listen to your lips with a delight not only ineffable but apparent.

But rarely do your words burst from the heart to shoot straight at other hearts, to touch and overturn them. They have the smell of oil rather than the odor of the sun. But to-day, to twist and wring the spirit, we need the freshness of love and simplicity rather than the intricacies and trappings of pleading eloquence.

Among you there are the finest diplomats and graduates of all the learned societies, professors worthy of any university chair, professors not only of ethics and dogma, but of ornithology, conchology, philology, and rhabdomancy. I admire your knowledge, but in truth I say to you that we need today, above all, recasters, modelers and remolders of conscience; there is a need of saints more than a need of scholars. The most terrible dearth today is the dearth of saints. For a long time the world has endured a penury of saints. To save what still can be saved, we would need an army of saints. I expect them from you, because, more than anyone else, through the obligations of your office you are close to the source and well spring of holiness.

It is not enough to be, as you are, the cleansers of the poor

souls who still kneel in your confessionals. The greater number of these unclean come not to be bathed at your basins, come not to be restored by the bread that you alone can give them.

Do you never ask yourselves why so many eager souls, so many intelligent minds, so many men capable of faith and sacrifice never come to you; why they do not enter your churches? Have you never questioned yourselves as to why the crowds that listen to you are composed of women and children, rather than of growing youths and mature men?

The causes for this desertion are many, and you are not to blame for them all.

But do you not think perhaps that your coldness alienates the eager souls, that your poverty of heart repels the generous spirits, that your measured mediocrity is repugnant to the spirit thirsty for the sublime, that the insularity of your too cautious minds discourages the free souls?

You too often give the impression that you believe religion is solely your affair, that Christianity is your monopoly, and that the Church is your private domain. Surely, the Pope will never deny the high dignity of the priesthood and the eternal moral rights of the hierarchy, but you must also remember that the Church is the mystical body of Christ, and that to this body belongs, not only the tonsured, but all the faithful. For salvation, all must be born the second time in Christ. And Christ, as you know, came to this earth for all men, sacrificed himself for all mankind. You should appeal to the laity more than you now do; the laity that could collaborate in your work—not in that which is yours alone, but in the work of conversion and redemption. And, more earnestly, you should seek the strayed ones, the refugees, the rebellious,

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the recalcitrant, the faithless, those without Christ, those without God, and compel them to hear, with the irresistible power of your love, of the beauty, the grandeur, and the certainty of our faith. Remember the words of our Master: "*Compelle intrare.*"<sup>2</sup> You do not have enough appetite for souls. You are content to keep your meager flocks sheltered, but you do not suffer enough for the wandering sheep, nor pursue enough the hundreds lost or strayed that, like the others, also belong to you, that belong by divine right of life and death to our Lord. Do not wait for them near your altars; seek them where they live, in fortresses or stables, and lead them back as if they were beloved sons who had been carried off; uncover your bleary eyes, unseal your locked hearts. Perhaps among the enemies of today you will find the most powerful allies of tomorrow.

Put aside, for the time being, the innumerable devotions to which the still half-pagan masses of people are so addicted, the devotions which you tolerate with such condescension and yet stimulate and cultivate. No one more than I venerates the Virgin Mother, the queenly servant of the King of Kings, who is above all women. But do not act so that it appears to the profane and spiteful that Catholicism, even if only among the devotion of the common people, is a cult of the Madonna more than of the Trinity. You remember the Father but a little; still less the Holy Ghost. If it were not for the "Our Father" and the "Creed," the Creator of heaven and earth, the Consoler who baptized the Apostles with fire, would be much less remembered by you than are Mary and the Saints.

The images, the relics, the papier-mâché statues, the

<sup>2</sup> "Compel them to come in."

tissue-paper flowers—these are the visible and ephemeral things, and are not to be placed above the spirit. Reclothe yourselves, first of all, in Christ; invoke more often the help of the Third Person, who quickens and illuminates. Do not trust only the word, do not allow yourselves to be ensnared by the letter, nor give heed only to the outer forms of religion. Be to all an example of humility, poverty, and charity; go out among the people, weep with those who weep, divide your bread with the starving, approach the wayward, accept the insults, the outrages, the vituperations, with joy. This will be your most victorious apology, this your most effective prayer, this your most inspiring sermon, superior to the “holy eloquence” as the miracle of a saint is superior to the syllogism of a teacher. And if to attain this perfection of effective and spiritual discipleship you must abstain from some novena, some triduum, some procession, feast, church consecration, or pilgrimage, little harm will be done: I, with the power invested in me by God, will forgive and absolve you.

You know what your name signifies. The body of elders, that is, the far-sighted, those who must look far ahead, gaze at the pinnacles and summits, toward the heights, toward infinity. Why, instead, are you content to scrutinize the minutiae, the smallest details, like wretched myopics?

Remember, if you can, the hyperhuman dignity of your call to be collaborators, ambassadors, allies of God among men. Remember, as St. Paul said, it is for you to judge even the angels. The health of the human species is in your hands. If Christianity is the only cure, you are and must be the doctors and ministers for the universal illness.

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Let not one of you suffer from vertigo in the ascent of the white mountain of the universal Transfiguration. Think not that you are only the tutors of catechism and dispensers of the sacraments. Be much more, immeasurably more. Do you not realize that you are the necessary supplements for salvation? Do not be frightened by the extraordinary task that the Lord imposes upon you. There is need of you to bring happiness where the souls die before the body. Today all the world is "*positus in maligno*";<sup>3</sup> the paying of the ransom is for you to do.

With the black of your habit, you wear mourning. Mourning, not for the death of Christ who rose from the sepulcher and is triumphant in heaven, but mourning for all the murdered, for all those who died without hope, for all the catastrophes that the disobedience to Christ has provoked.

I supplicate you in the name of the living God, my brothers and my sons that I love more than myself, I supplicate you in the name of the *Fiat* <sup>4</sup> of the first day, in the name of the *Sitio* <sup>5</sup> on the Cross, in the name of the tongues of fire of the Pentecost, in the name of my aged heart torn with affliction. Have the will to be more than men. Have the courage to be fanatics, with that folly which is wisdom in the eyes of the Most High. Do not fear death, fear only inutility in life and paucity of spirit. In the name of the fire of the Holy Ghost, be less cold, less mediocre, less slothful, less stony. If you would ascend and help others ascend, crucify yourselves, with your hands on the rough wood of humanity. Only

<sup>3</sup> placed in wickedness.

<sup>4</sup> Let there be light. Genesis 1:3.

<sup>5</sup> From the cry of Christ on the Cross, "I thirst." St. John 19:28.

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by saving your brothers, all your brothers, even those who desire your death, can you bring the purulent world, besieged Christianity, the decimated Church, and yourselves, to salvation.

Pope Celestine VI

Servant of the servants of God



## CHAPTER III

### TO THE MONKS AND BROTHERS

*My brothers,*

*my sons,*

CHRIST COMPELS me to speak also to you, and not only to acknowledge the glories of your Orders and the inestimable benefits the Church has derived from you. You know with what loving vigilance this Apostolic Seat has validated your foundations and has watched over your life. Never has this affection, admiration, and gratitude dimmed in me.

For centuries you have been the advance guard of adventurers and pioneers in the army of God, the Spartan and Macedonian phalanxes of the Church, now desperadoes, now mounted warriors, now heroic foot-soldiers in the gigantic battle against the Enemy. Every one of your Orders was born from the impassioned will of a saint, and each Order, at least for a period of time, was the seed-bed of apostles, the womb of the wise, the nursery of the blessed. You were beloved by the people, protected by the heads of states, and the pontiffs kept you near as auxiliaries and assistants.

And this was right, because in principle your choice was a sublime one. Most of mankind, intent upon work and pleasure, were not able to carry out in full the life advocated by the Gospel. You abandoned the world in order to give back to it the spectacle and the example of Christian perfection.

Even if all men cannot pursue this life, at least there are throngs of champions who demonstrate that it is not impossible to obey the precepts of the Man-God. You renounced the voluptuousness of the flesh for the ecstasy of the spirit, you relinquished the goods of this world for the treasures of heaven, you disdained the profits of trading for the commerce of God. You have set yourselves free from the domination of the powerful, to attain, through obedience to the Rule of your Orders, the freedom of the disciples of the Messiah.

Your monasteries and convents were communal colonies in the midst of the egotistic greed of those avid for possessions; sheepfolds of the chaste in the midst of slaves of luxury; families of praying ascetics in the midst of hedonists. There were centuries in which your huts, hidden in the forests or clinging to the mountainside, were the only oases, solitary and gleaming, of charity and civilization, of humanity, and superhumanity. And whenever the Church needed to be brought back to purity, be defended against the onslaughts of error, be helped in reconquest; the new Orders, appropriate to the times, and giving evidence to the unfailing assistance of the Holy Ghost, were legions of cavaliers and nurses, armies of proclaimers of truth, of heroes of pity.

But if I perceive and think of what you have become today, today when the need is so much greater, my heart is moved with burning indignation. Not all of your original virtue is dissipated, but oh, how much of it has dimmed and weakened! Among you there are still monks of good stuff, brothers of good mettle, but they are so rare in the vast gorge of relaxed habits, so unable to rekindle in all that fire of mighty, burning love from which the Orders rose, fires that were like jets of sparks bursting from the open forge of the Gospel. I

do not wish to say what I am saying and will say to you, brothers and sons, but indeed it is because of my love that I am incited to speak to you as perhaps no one else has ever spoken to you. Monasticism, originally, was flight from the world; today it appears, for many reasons, a flight from the laws you accepted and from the responsibilities you voluntarily assumed.

In the Orders where manual labor is a requirement, almost no work is done, or little more than setting out a garden no larger than an altar cloth. In the Orders that ought to be maintained by begging, almost no one is a beggar: the collecting of alms is relegated to the lay brothers, little more than errand boys, because the Fathers are reluctant to do that which their Saints did in a saintly manner, extend the hand and carry the bag of offerings. Those brothers who should have mixed with people to fight heresy and bring to the people the living and speaking example of the Gospel, shut themselves up in their monasteries, where, notwithstanding their professed poverty, they lack none of the most common needs of life, and go out only to celebrate a few Masses, preach a few sermons, to assist some parish priest, and give a few instructions according to a proscribed curriculum in an accredited and qualified school.

They should have been like indefatigable gulls, wheeling in the open air, screaming and scolding along every shore; among the weary, the laborers, the beggars, and the lost; and instead they are like birds who no longer fly, but are content to rustle among papers and scratch among the library books, to cluck in the church choir and peck in the refectory. They should have been like watch dogs and hunting dogs, fangs bared, ever vigilant, urging the flocks back into the right

path; instead they have become big cats, tame and slumbrous, that purr nostalgically, lovers of nooks and corners; at best, good only for chasing some gaunt, lean mouse, or for spitting at some vagrant cat.

You do not mix enough in the melting pot of life. You do not seek enough the company of men, even though they be evil-doers or rogues. You do not run enough to help souls in danger, going even where you are not called, to share with your torment in the tortures of your brothers.

You are too segregated in your convents, too retired in your sanctuaries, too muffled up in your cells. If, at least, be as they were as in other times, castles of penitence and joy or even castles of pleasures where all those hungry for the new sap gathered joyously; but today, more often than not, your monasteries are something midway between a medieval museum and a rural farmhouse, a hostel and a boarding house, between a nursery for novitiates and a laboratory of sacred erudition. Some convents seem like a group of indigent kinsmen withdrawn from life, rather than missionaries of the One who was the way, the truth, and the life; others are like private schools for young men of good family, or institutions for needy scholars, more desirous of peace and quiet than sanctity. Of all the roles bequeathed you by the founders of your Orders—and they were many and varied, and all good—there has remained, one might say, only that of schoolmaster. By now you are almost all teachers and instructors. Every Order has become a network of schools. You teach in conventual schools, in novitiates, religious schools, private schools, seminaries, learned societies, conservatories, secondary schools, high schools, and in universities. The greater number of you, after celebrating Mass, have no other oc-

cupation than studying and teaching. Certain Orders are nothing more than machines devoted solely to the internal production of brothers of that same Order, who in time will train their successors. It is almost impossible, nowadays, to imagine a monk whose robe is not behind a desk, a ruler in his hand, and a textbook in his cowl.

You well understand that I realize how fine and laudable is the task of instructing children and youths. But is it indeed the chief, the only purpose intended by your founders? Did they really desire you to be nothing more than teachers and preceptors? And are there not tasks—today more than ever—that should be accomplished by you by right and duty, that are at least as important as teaching school? Public preaching, the tender care of him who suffers in body and soul, the steeling of the doubtful and hesitant, the consolation of those sick in mind and body, the repatriation of the exiles of the Gospel, the redemption of all the victims, are not these tasks more befitting, much more befitting than the distribution of Latin syntax, the theory of fractions, Greek history, and comparative literature?

And so you teach not only the great divine sciences, the principles and mysteries of our religion, which would be right and natural, but you teach a little of everything, everything knowable, both real and fantastic, every practical and worldly art and science, every kind and quality of learning.

All excellent things. But are you so convinced that monasticism was instituted to provide the world with purveyors of encyclopedic minutiae?

The world today is succumbing to an infinite and insidious disease. Among the graver symptoms is the luxuriant growth and invasion of the pseudo-wise, of the half-wise, of those

with certificates, diplomas, licenses, degrees, the paper-scratchers and pen-pushers. There is a dangerous flood of manuscripts and publications. If man does not perish in an avalanche of fire, he will surely drown in a flood of ink. There is a great deal more need now for strong laborers, industrious workmen, decent artisans, reclaimers and healers of souls, angels in human form—in short, saints, rather than examiners and examined, professors, and bachelors of art. Instead of reading so many books, it would be much better to know how to read men's souls so as to be able to give them that inner peace without which world peace will be forever impossible.

You learn, and teach too much to too many. Many of you, for example, exhaust yourselves investigating point by point, day by day, the life of your founders and the vicissitudes of your Orders. You do well, but does there never come to you a fear that your enemies might say, maliciously laughing up their sleeves, that it would be much better to imitate these saints in their holy lives rather than spend so much time following them step by step in the documents of the archives and in the flowering of pious legends?

And today there is more need than ever to imitate them. You call yourselves monks, but you listen too much to the vain noises of the world; you call yourselves brothers, but you are not always fraternal even with your companions. Jesus said that in order to follow Him, we must leave father, mother, and brothers, while many of you, even in your cloister, are occupied, more than is necessary, with the affections and interests of your family.

Yours should be a heroic life of sacrifice and struggle, but unfortunately there are not a few of you who are enclosed in monasteries in order to escape from manual labor and the

duties of the city in the struggle for existence. The weak, the timid, the pernicious, and the lazy sometimes see in the cloister a respectable and peaceful asylum from the stormy world. They are in error, because you are not called to a drowsy repose of the elect, but to the hard work of a dangerous militia.

To be sure, your convents ought to be schools, but schools of action, schools of living evidence of the full adoption of the Gospel. You ought to demonstrate to mankind what men could and should do. You ought to be proofs and models of Christian heroism. Give lessons, teach, but teach real lessons of benignity, piety, forgiveness, succor, mortification, and liberation. It is not enough to recite your office, read your breviary, to give a little soup to beggars and a few comforting words to the afflicted, to sing in church and mount the pulpit, to bring Communion to the sick, and to bury the dead. You are chosen soldiers of Christ, but true soldiers do not remain closed up in their forts pondering the exploits of the leaders of long ago and repeating hymns of ancient victories. In this stage of the decisive battle between God and Satan, we need a vast sortie, a desperate assault against the massing forces of Evil. The harvest is enormous and the reapers are few. In the name of God and of man, leave your learned texts at times, and your peaceful cloisters, roll up your sleeves, grasp that cross that has the form of a sword and go out in the fields to give a helping hand to the men of good will who work so that on this earth, after so much desolation, may be founded the kingdom of heaven.

Do not tell me that the religious Orders are also destined for contemplation and that your prayers, communal or solitary, are useful though invisible, to the salvation of mankind.

Do you believe perhaps that I can forget one of the marvelous mysteries of our faith, the Communion of Saints? It is of such sublimity that even the so-called "cultured" are not able to understand it. And because they do not comprehend it, they ridicule the ascetic who prays and suffers in silence and in solitude to lessen the weight of human blame, to incline divine justice on the side of human misery.

But frankly, tell me the truth: how many monks are there today who live lives of pure contemplation? Where are the anchorites of the first centuries, where are the penitents who tortured themselves to expiate the sensual pleasure of sin, where are the hermits consecrated to prayer and meditation, where are the mystics ravished with delight in God, united to Christ in His passion, united to the Creator in a unitive vision? I do not perceive among you those ecstatic ones whose gaze is fixed solely on the blinding light of Paradise, I do not see among you him who lives as one dead to gain, for the wretched, eternal life.

And, with the passing of the centuries, the contemplative Orders are no longer those hearth fires of perpetual prayer, of voluntary torment that they once were. Except for the very few monasteries and convents where men and women still follow the primitive regulations, I do not know how many there are among you who live a completely supernatural life, who plunge into the abyss of divine love in order to snatch forgiveness for sinners. If the heroes of action are few, still rarer are the heroes of contemplation.

He who lives in prayer and renunciation to achieve his own salvation is not yet a saint. He is the purest of the egoists, but in the eyes of the abandoned he is always the one



who thinks only of his own soul and his own salvation. To-day the world is strewn with mountains of ashes; it is a limitless hospital, an immense lunatic asylum. You cannot remain tranquil in your basilicas, in your scholastic halls, your libraries, your cells. God calls you with a great voice, with all the ringing power of His infinite love, to save His people. All are needed, but especially you who have consecrated yourselves to proclaim on earth the saving truths that have come down from Heaven. All are needed, but not merely as readers of theology, grammar-school teachers, preachers of Lenten sermons, biographers, hagiographers, parochial assistants, psalm singers, and the Saturday mendicants. There is a need, a need impossible to ignore or defer, of itinerant apostles, missionaries who will teach Christianity to Christians, brothers without a frown and without fear who will go out among their brothers in the world, who will know how to cure the spiritual lepers, who will go into palaces, into isolated cottages, and even in the taverns to remind the forgetful that only in the Gospel lies the secret of peace, of light that can bring true happiness to all forever.

In this hour of imminent barbarity, charity is the paramount necessity. All else, even science, even contemplation, must be put aside, as well as those things that are more delightful to our hearts. For you and for all, the day of the supreme test has arrived. Either man chooses to practice Christianity daily and joyfully, even if it be in its most elementary precepts, or he will be condemned to the most horrible agony, to the tortures of an earthly hell which will end only in universal slaughter and universal suicide. Priests, monks, brothers, yours is the chief role in this gigantic work

of conversion. You cannot say, as others will, that it does not concern you. You cannot invoke alibis and pretexts. I know with certainty that there are among you generous spirits who have not taken lightly the promises made to Christ, and have given great evidence of brotherhood in the whirlwind that has overturned the world. But perhaps you are restrained by timidity, by the dubity of too great a human prudence, by bonds of custom, by the temptations of the "angel with the little book," by fear of overwhelming, threatening enemies. Nevertheless, it will be a wonderful day for humanity when you leave your cloisters to journey over the highways of the world, to make the King of Kings the Emperor of all human creatures. Already I see you, as in a vision, like a buzzing swarm of tireless bees, scattering not to suck or sting, but to carry the medicinal honey of truth that heals every wound, eases every pain, that redeems every slave.

Perhaps the Holy Ghost, as in other epochs, will arouse a predestined one to found a new Order, an Order more suited to the needs of the times, an Order that will not close its followers in the dull shadows of its convent, but will urge them to be as men among men, ready to fight the enemy wherever he is encamped, ready to resuscitate the dead souls from all the whitened sepulchers of lies and shame. But such a foundation is the work of the Holy Ghost who breathes where He wishes, and we can only urge Him on with our humble desire.

Meanwhile I turn to you, all of you, you who burn in vain as forgotten fires in the stubble, to all those whose only sorrow is their lack of sanctity. Delay no further. Be no longer content to be as caged birds, birds of the courtyard, but birds of

TO THE MONKS AND BROTHERS

prey and rapine, the ravens of Elias, the eagles of St. John, the falcons of St. Francis, and the pelicans of Christ. God will give you wings so tremendous that under them you can gather all His Sons.

Pope Celestine VI  
Servant of the servants of God

## CHAPTER IV

### TO THE THEOLOGIANS

*My brothers,*

*my sons,*

DO YOU RECALL the position of your science in what can now be considered ages past? Theology was then the empress of sciences; not only was philosophy her servant and hand-maiden, but indeed all the sciences and all the arts that raise man above the beast. This universal sovereignty was an obvious and legitimate one. The objective of Theology was the highest to which the human mind could aspire: it was the science of the knowledge of God, His mysteries, His attributes, and His accomplishments. It taught of the Author, and hence of His work: it taught of the Creator and likewise of the order and beauty of creation. It was right that every other learning should be subordinate to the study of Him who is. If God is the Being par excellence; all the rest is mere shadow or reflection of Him, everything has its origin and substance in Him, all things converge in Him, and are illumined by Him. Theology, erected boldly and firmly on the masterly pillars of Revelation, Tradition, and Reason, raised its pinnacles in the pure skies of faith and intellect, as a massive cathedral constructed of granite blocks joined with mortar of sapphire.

Your enemies speak falsely when they say that Theology is a parasitic fungus superimposed upon the immaculate sim-

plicity of the Gospel. The New Testament contains, with St. John and St. Paul, the first inspired Theology. The knowledge of the Church Fathers was the dewy and budding springtime of Theology; Scholasticism, in the three centuries of its creative growth, was one of the most fecund summers in the evolution of the human mind. They who scoff at the glories of Scholasticism and deem it only a Gothic arsenal of antiquated cannon and rusty armor, are unaware that this great era for speculative audacity and analytic profundity is comparable only to the miraculous flowering of Greek philosophy. "Modern thought," as you well know, was more often than not, only a secular disguise of Theology, or at most an attempt to flee from Theology, that is, to retreat from God and destroy Him. The most famous systems of the last centuries were only Scholasticism camouflaged in new forms, or Scholasticism inverted into pantheism or atheism. None can refrain from speaking of God, not even those who declare Him dead, and exhaust themselves in furious obituaries.

Why, then, is divine Theology so unpopular among men today? Why is the supreme science, the science of God, ignored today even among the educated? Why do we see it, above all in our own Church, relegated to seminary classrooms and monastery lecture halls? Why do those times seem fabulous, those times when bakers and drapers as well as men of the world and men of letters argued passionately in the markets and salons on the problems of Incarnation and Grace?

What has happened? Does a doubt never present itself to your minds that the maximum blame for such a lamentable desertion may be yours?

Question your conscience, and answer with Christian frankness. The responsibility for this change is not yours entirely, but it rests upon you before all others. The great causes are never overthrown by enemies, but lost through the weakness and disloyalty of their defenders. What use have you made, in recent centuries, of the supernatural treasure that was entrusted to you? Why have you allowed others, the ineffectual friends or avowed enemies of God, to take your place in the attention of the thoughtful?

The truth, the sad truth, is that fiery, creative thought has passed from you. After St. Thomas—and let us say, even after Suarez—you have been unable to raise a new and powerful theological system. Only the great heresies succeeded for a time in inflaming the spirits and in stirring the minds. The initiative has passed from you to your enemies, the philosophers; and today, we can say, there is no well-informed, educated lay person who either heeds your work or is enthusiastic over your opinions. Even the separated Churches show more signs of life than does our own Church. In the Eastern Orthodox and the Northern Lutheran attempts were made to revive a theology that succeeded in awakening even the impious. In your enclosed world, nothing has happened. For hundreds of years you have trodden and retrodden the highway of tradition and left it in such a dark and impassable condition that even the most intrepid travelers prefer to clamber up the paths of a rocky mountain, or lose themselves in the undergrowth of a forest.

For too long a time, there has not appeared among you a genius like the great Scholastics who knew how to carry his sole aim and purpose through new journeyings. Since St. Anselmo and St. Thomas, you have not been able to add one

new proof to the existence of God, nor offer one concept of the Redemption more profound than that of Duns Scotus; you have not been able to pour the eternal wine of truth into flaming gourds, into chalices of clearer crystal.

Scholasticism has declined because of the excesses of verbal subtilties and the pedantic sophistries of the Occamists. You have buried your treasure and allowed it to molder in the gloomy prison of repetition. For centuries, you theologians have been little more than compilers of synopses, manipulators of manuals, registrars of the commonplace, nothing more than tedious commentators, exhumers, annotators, and rearrangers of ancient, hoary texts. To be sure, a just, diligent, well-documented repetition, but nevertheless repetition. Has it never occurred to you that warmed-over foods, in the long run, become a bore even to the greedy; that foods cooked and recooked in the same old pots, with the same old sauces, end by disgusting even the most patient palates? Every century has its language, its appetites, its dreams, and its problems; you have stopped the clock of history at the fourteenth century and you continue to dish up the same everlasting soup to the docile nurslings of the priesthood, without paying any attention to the Christians who are outside your cloistered doors, and who, by now, are accustomed to more appetizing and more palatable food. Would not even they feel a need to be invited to the meals where the most necessary food of man, the divine truth, is spread out? But as far as Theology is concerned, the ordinary Christian is nourished—and sometimes by forced feedings—only on the chopped up and immeasurably skimpy food that is served in the catechism. To be sure, there are included in it the fundamental axioms and corollaries of our dogma, but in such self-

evident and peremptory form, as pronouncements of mysteries and duties, that the immature mind can almost never understand them. Most of the time, these wordy little pronouncements that indeed contain the most sublime principles of Christianity in essence, fade with the years and are forgotten or ill remembered. Little more can be offered to children, but when they are mature they could learn and understand very much more. Why is it, then, that adult scholars who voraciously gulp down books of history, philosophy, politics, science, love poems, and fiction, are never attracted to a book of Theology? Could this obstinate loss of appetite that has now lasted for centuries, be due only to the perverted and corrupt taste of modern readers, or more to the fastidious mediocrity of captious repeaters? If among you there were one star of the first magnitude, high on the horizon, all men would have seen it and sought it out. But now you are like miserable candles that only by tremendous effort illuminate the shadows of tiny cells. The ancient and majestic in-folios of the theologians sleep a dusty sleep among the parchment and sheepskin pillows on the worm-eaten shelves of the libraries, where the laity rarely comes to awaken them. The works of modern theologians are only reference books for the personal use of the clergy or dry treatises far richer in quotations, divisions, and definitions than in vivid living thought, and thus are never read outside your austere but pathetic walls, save only by a group of ecclesiastic scholars. They are stews seen only on the tables of the cooks.

New versions and publications of St. Thomas have been made, courses in theology are offered to the laity. A not useless undertaking, inasmuch as at last some men have been brought to look at and listen to the massive fortress of the



*Summa* of Aquinas. If it wishes to reconquer the interest of the distracted and the strayed, can the science of God remain forever on the guarded bastions and postern gates of the 1300's? Can not Theology, as all the sciences, have its advancements and its progress? Did not that same St. Thomas seem a revolutionary in his own time, to the point of arousing opposition and condemnation? Compare St. Augustine and St. Bonaventure, both strong and secure in the faith of Christ and of Rome, both nourished by full wisdom and learning, both radiating and soaring in the Third Heaven of love. And yet how different in their Theology, although issuing from the same source and reaching the same heights. St. Bonaventure preferred and made use of the work of St. Augustine, but he did not repeat him. With the wings of the genius of Tagaste, the genius of Bagnoregio made other flights.

There are still marvelous revelations in the Scriptures that could be lovingly unveiled; there are, in the Church Fathers, rough diamonds that await the cutting of their facets in order to shine more brilliantly; there are, in the Scholastics, stupendous theories hidden from the many by syllogistic wrappings, that could be the beginning of a new rise in dogma. It is not true that all has been said, and that we are nothing but the speaking trumpets of the dead. Every century the journey of the spirit begins anew, and perhaps one may see in the future a Theology so brilliant with light—mounting from the inexhaustible abyss of Eternal Revelation—that, our inheritance, notwithstanding its marvelous architecture, will seem little more than a rough sketch to the future Christian adventurers; they will judge it as the titans of Scholasticism judged the first doctrinal systems of the Church Fathers. The human race and the Christian world have been educated

step by step: who will dare to put temporal limitations on divine designs and human effort? With faith I await another golden age of your science: new saintly illuminations, new poetic intuitions, new interpretations of the erudite will return Theology to its place, as in ages past, as the queen of the sovereign spirits.

It is your turn to prepare this new triumph. But first you must rid yourselves of laziness; rid your work of the creaking wheels of repetition, of syllogistic mechanics, of the formal and wordy pedantry that is rancid and rotten to modern nostrils. Do not tell me, I beg of you, that the profane and worldly readers are unimportant to you. We have the entire responsibility of *all* souls, even of those who do not sit at your school desks, even of those who do not know the rules of Aristotelian logic and the history of dogma.

Go out at times into the open air, listen to the voices of those who are hungry for truth, do not scorn to learn something from the nontheologians. I tell you to listen first to the poets. You will be great theologians if you do not overlook some poetic quality. Dialectical castles in the air are not enough when one would ascend to the heights. The two Testaments that are also the source and foundation of your doctrine are brimful of poetry. St. Augustine the theologian was a poet, even as Dante the poet was a theologian. But you are horrified before the ardor, the beauty, the music of thought. Art and fantasy seem insupportably scandalous to you. You build the highest towers with the most refined rationalistic engineering, and then you plug up every possible loophole from which one might catch a glimpse of a mountain top, the line of the sea, a flower of the field, or the face of a child. You prattle on the creation without even dignifying

by a glance its concrete form, you elaborate on the mysteries without perceiving the divine perennial mystery that is just as present in the exquisite white berries of the hedge as in the pale gigantic galaxies that escape to the limits of the universe; you theorize on the human mind, and yet you do not perceive that near you are eager, enthusiastic minds, which perhaps await only one word from you to precede you upon the stairs that climb to eternity.

The study of God is so stupendous that it seems to me a sign of pride in you not to seek and accept all human collaboration—even that of the divine children who are the poets, of those children whom Jesus called to Himself—pre-figurations of poets who are, if inferior to saints, immeasurably superior to those who philosophize.

The *Summa* is a fortified, turreted citadel of the intellect, a masterpiece of that age of light and not shadow that was the Middle Ages. But today, if you wish to reconquer the minds of men, it will not suffice. Other plots, other arms, other unrests, and other temptations threaten the Christian people. You cannot remain forever in that Acropolis that the many deem unworthy of either visit or assault. You too, like the priests, the monks, the brothers, must make your great advance, must rush to the pursuit of the deserters, change the aspects, the methods, the problems of your science, in order to be able to offer it as a vital nutriment to living minds.

My predecessors have cautioned you to prudence, because many of you were, at one time, too daring. Today, because you are floundering and gasping in a sea of indifference and monotony, I exhort you to daring exploits. You well know that I have no intention of urging you to risk the navigation of the black sea of absurdity and heresy. Truth suffers no

changes of fashion or fantasy. The texts of the Revelation and the dogmas of faith are as they are, and are always the same. But in the words of the Revelation, you can find new meanings, more profound than have ever been seen; these dogmas may be reached by new highways even more secure than the ancient roads. The history of the Church demonstrates that new dogmas develop gradually, adding themselves to the old, as the jeweler adds gem to gem to make the royal crown more regal.

Theologians, I exhort you to dare. Not, to be sure, to put the prestige of your intellectual virtuosity to the test—that would be an insult to you and to your work—but because to-day there is a need of you for the total Christianizing of mankind. Theology too will have its share, a great one, in the salvation of man and his civilization.

You know, or you ought to know, that in the last analysis, the opinions and attitudes of the multitude depend upon the men of study and genius. If you succeed in winning over the aristocrats of the mind, shortly thereafter you will see the return of the masses.

And this reconquest is important, not only to the ends of knowledge, but above all for a universal regeneration and resurrection. To make the profundity of the Christian faith known—which is your mission—means to increase the love of Christ, it means to effect a transmutation of the spirit from above, which today is not only the mission and ambition of priests, but an immediate necessity of all mankind, if they wish to rest in peace, and ascend in joy. I say this to you, and I will continue to say it until my last breath: all men must become Christians or they will agonizingly perish. You too can collaborate in this work of salvation that must come from

the spirit if it is to have sure results even in the world of everyday life and of politics.

Now, you are the deserted and almost unknown instructors of sacred collections. You must become, as once you were, teachers of teachers, so that once again, God will tower aloft in the heights of human understanding, will dominate minds, live in hearts, purify intentions, and dwell completely in all men. You must leave the small peaks of your ivory towers to become active laborers in this revival of Christianity. Even you, who have been little more than ghosts wrapped in ancient, moth-eaten, frayed monks' robes, have no other choice: either you get out into the fight, as knights resplendent with a brilliant oriflame, or you will end in extinction, thrown into confusion by the trampling hordes of the Antichrist.

You must re-excite men of intellect to your science. Make them know and understand that it is not a dead science used only by the dying, but a food for every mouth, destined to bring new life even to those who scarcely know its name. It is your fault that there are too many of the latter, who regard theology as an almost esoteric learning, for the initiated and the expert, a privilege and a monopoly jealously guarded by the hierarchy of the Church. Some felicitous and audacious inspiration would suffice to bring the thirsty flocking from all directions. There are many thirsty men today, not knowing always for what they thirst, and this fact alone doubles their thirst. But I know that many among these parched ones thirst for that sap of truth that we alone are able to give and that for too long we have either entirely withheld or, if we have offered it, has not been intoxicating enough nor pure enough.

I remember in my youth, in the vigil of my ordination,

having known an old monk who, after a long life of prayer and study, had abandoned teaching and hidden himself in the poorest monastery of his Order. His confreres considered him a saint, but he seldom and only briefly mingled with people. One solemn evening—it was Holy Saturday—I found myself, I know not why, in his cell, and he wished to confide one of his thoughts to me; because of my youthful enthusiasm for the glory of God, he was more loquacious than usual. He maintained that the theologians had still not penetrated the mystery of the Holy Trinity. If the nature of the three Divine Persons is one, it must follow necessarily that each operated or must operate in the same manner as the others. If the Father is the Creator and the Son the Redeemer, we can do no less than believe that the Father also fulfilled His own Redemption and the Son His Creation. And if the first two Persons manifested themselves to mankind in the evident perfection of their love—on Mt. Sinai and Golgotha—it is right to expect a like manifestation from the Third Person, that is, the Holy Ghost. The Paraclete too, announced by Christ in the Gospel of St. John, said the old monk, must be at the same time, Creator and Redeemer.

I asked him in what the Redemption of the Father consisted. He explained to me that the Father, creating the material world, desired to offer a possibility of salvation to the rebellious and fallen angels, by giving these proud beings a sublime example of humiliation: a unique and perfect spirit that creates the plurality of material things. According to his expression, which I have never forgotten, the entire universe is an immense cross upon which is stretched the Father. The materialization of the spirit corresponds to the incarnation

of the Son who was sacrificed through the imprisonment of a Divine Person in the human flesh.<sup>1</sup>

The Son, continued the old monk, was also a Creator, because the Redemption was likewise a second Creation. And here he recalled certain ideas of Gregory of Nyssa<sup>2</sup> and of Theofane of Nicea, according to whom the restoration to man of his likeness to God, the promise and reward of the final deification, that is, of the return of all beings to their original glorified state from which they descended, was a repetition and complement of the creative act of the Father.

Finally, he maintained that the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost was a particular and almost secret manifestation, designed to enrich the Apostles with supernatural gifts for the mission that awaited them, but that it is permissible for Christians to await, even to desire, a full and universal manifestation of the Third Person, in His creative and redemptive power, before the end of the world. It will be, he added with inspired accents, the supreme gift of love, the ultimate expression of divine charity, after which every doubt will be dispelled, every shadow dissipated, and every excuse of the incredulous mere vain blasphemy. If the Persons of the Trinity have only one nature and therefore the same function, it is not fallaciously presumptuous to expect,

<sup>1</sup> I maintain that this alludes to a profound thought of St. Paul. *Ephesians* 2:5-18. (Papini's note)

<sup>2</sup> Concerning St. Gregory of Nyssa, I think that the allusion is from his famous discourse "Oratio Catechetica" (XXV,2). The ideas of Theofane of Nicea (Byzantine theologian, died 1381) on the Redemption as a second creation, are set forth in his "Discorso sulle Grandezze della Theotikos Immaculata" (now published by M. Jugie with the title, "Sermo in Sanctissimam Deiparam," Rome, Lateran, 1935). Similar ideas are also found in St. Ireneus, in St. Anastasius, and in other theologians. (Papini's note)

with the humility of faith, the future solemn manifestation of the Holy Ghost.

The error of Joaquin da Fiore and his followers, added the venerable monk, consisted in their desire to determine the date and the manner of such a descent, thus dangerously exciting the imaginations, the hopes, and the insubordinations of restless spirits. Notwithstanding this, the Church has never condemned outside the pulpit the works of the Calabrian Abbot Joaquin, placed by Dante in the highest circle of paradise, but only some rash affirmations of his disciples.<sup>3</sup> No Christian will be blamed if he still awaits with impatient but modest silence a third manifestation of God, implicit in the very explanations of orthodox theology.

That pious religious told me that he had abandoned teaching in order not to scandalize needlessly immature intellects with his daring doctrines, but that he hoped that there would come the day, even though remote, in which a new generation of theologists, progressing from the Scriptures, the Church Fathers, and the Doctors, would develop this tremendous conception, capable, according to him, of re-instilling a love for the divine science of God, even in those who for so long a time had deserted it.

Today, I am the Pope, and to me has been entrusted the custody of the integrity of the faith and the infallible power of the Church. I cannot then exhort you to undertake a journey, perhaps pathless, perhaps perilous, that journey

<sup>3</sup>The IV Lateran Council (1215) condemned the writer Joachim on the Trinity against Pietro Lombardo, but today it has been shown that that treatise was not written by the famous abbot. The condemnation pronounced at Anagni in 1255 examined the famous "Introductorius" of Gerardo da Borgo San Donnino, Franciscan Joachimite, but not the authentic works of the prophet.



which the old monk pointed out to me in my youth. But I confess to you, with Christian freedom, that I have never been able to forget the impassioned words of that old, courageous, venerable monk, who visibly lived and breathed completely in the pure, white love of God and His glory. Even now, I seem to hear his voice reading to me the mysterious prophecy of Joel and the verses of St. John.<sup>4</sup>

I learned at least one thing from him: that religion cannot live in the hearts of men if it is not refired by a sense of expectancy. There is no need constantly to return to the Epiphany of the Spirit. It would be enough if you always strove to make possible a better understanding of that abyss of love and of light that is the dogma of the Redemption. Too many Christians too readily believe that with the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross the work of the redemption is concluded. But you know, and you ought to teach with ever-increasing ardor, that that concept is not true. As Paul told us,<sup>5</sup> not only must we supplement the Passion of Christ with our own sorrow, but we must remember each day that the Redemption can never have its full effect if it is not accepted, understood, and continued by man. God has done His full part; now it is our turn. Our share consists not only in a loving participation in the divine sacrifice, but demands an even greater collaboration, always higher and more aware, to the point of rendering us worthy of the sublime assurance that Christ desired not

<sup>4</sup> Perhaps here is meant the passage of Joel wherein is prophesied the universal effusion of the Holy Ghost (Joel II, 28-32). The promise of the coming of the Paraclete is in the Gospel according to St. John, 14:16-17. (Papini's note)

<sup>5</sup> Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for his body, which is the church. Colossians 1:24. (Papini's note)

only to cancel the sin of mankind, but to re-integrate in us the fullness of our original perfection.

We must make Christians and all men understand that the Transfiguration of the Redeemer is a symbol and an annunciation of the Transfiguration of man and his own nature. All that was debased and degraded by sin must regain its original dignity and grandeur, all must return to God and in God. We, before all other men, have the duty and the joy to assist in this ascension, in this universal redemption. Nature too, according to St. Paul,<sup>6</sup> moans with labor pains, because with Adam it became enslaved and must be set free, that is, must be resolved and sublimated in the spirit through the efforts of the sons of Adam.

To be sure, Christians are not only passive servants of God, who did everything for them so that their only task is to obey and serve Him with loving docility. They are called to a task much greater than they know; they are invited to be actors in the reascension of all beings, beside the Eternal Protagonist who wished, as the poet said, "to make a vaster imprint of his creative spirit."<sup>7</sup>

But the many, through ignorance or laziness, do not do that which God, in the name of His infinite love, asks of our finite love. They believe that Christ paid with His blood, and that in order to buy salvation there is nothing else to do except to attend Mass, often more with the flesh than with the spirit, and occasionally receive one of the Sacraments of the Church. Instead, much more is asked of the faithful: they must understand, suffer, endure, and experiment under the guidance of God, in order to hasten the reconciliation of all

<sup>6</sup> Romans 8:18-23. (Papini's note)

<sup>7</sup> From Manzoni's *Cinque Maggio*. (Translator's note)

## TO THE THEOLOGIAN

creatures, the final ascension of the created to the Creator. Consequently, Christian life must be, not one of habitual servility, but one of fiery cooperation and confiding expectation. Every hour we must prepare for that perfect restoration into the Divine, made possible by Christ: the age-old journey of mankind had its beginning in God, and in God will it have its end.

I speak to you, Theologians, who know how to arouse in Christians that bubbling and fermentation of expectancy that so stimulated the first apostolic community. I ask you to carry away the sleeping and the obstinate souls with the holy violence of genius, to inflame them and plunge them into the shining flood of divine wisdom. If all Christians are to be untiring co-adjutors of God, the office of guides and trail-blazers falls to you. With new eyes, reread the ancient famous volumes; come out of your cavernous alchemistic laboratories, wherein you often change gold into lead, and light into darkness. Reinforce the torpid, of the heights; the weary, of the fountains. Once again be conquering and powerful seers. Be, thanks to the science of God, saviors of mankind.

I can do no more than pray each day for your exodus from the sepulchers, so that there may hover above you, always generous and imperious, the illuminating Grace of the Holy Ghost.

Pope Celestine VI  
Servant of the servants of God

## CHAPTER V

### TO THE RICH

*My sons,*

I HAVE BEEN in doubt as to whether I would speak to you or not. Sentence against you was pronounced centuries ago by Him who sent me, and it is very clear that few marginal notes are necessary. But I remember too that He did not drive away the rich young man, nor did He refuse to sit at the tables of the publicans, and until the very end He called friend the disciple who had charge of, asked for, and took money. The journey to the Kingdom of Heaven is more difficult for the rich, but it is not impossible. But only a few among the rich who are called and who believe themselves Christians have known how to accomplish this journey, hence they have remained slaves and have perpetuated the slavery of others. Be mindful then, that when I speak of the rich, I mean those of enormous wealth and tremendous fortunes, the amassers of money, the insatiable snatchers and monopolists of capital and property, and not those who live comfortably because of their honest hard work.

If today man is bankrupt, prostrate in a manure-pit of shame and villainy, if man is held in the grip of the vices of mendacity and greed, a large share of the blame rests upon you, the money-mad capitalists wallowing in your riches. Hence, I wish to speak to you, of your misery, of your madness, of your unhappiness, and of your responsibilities, with

the hope that at least some of you may be stirred and awakened, and may expend in good that which was the price of evil.

I will speak, first of all of your poverty. In truth, I say to you that you who believe yourselves rich are in fact, poor. Modern wealth is no longer fluid, as was ancient wealth with its gold specie. And in the last analysis, even gold was only a metal, cold and glittering in disks or bars, incapable of providing real sustenance or real happiness unless it were traded for goods necessary for the preservation and joy of life. In itself, it was a useless burden, a creator of fear and envy, at most good only to gleam at the throats and on the wrists of women.

But today, the symbol and vehicle of wealth is a material even more ephemeral and dirty: paper. In your money boxes, as a rule you have only rectangles of paper, whose value depends solely on the credulity of others, the promises of the State, the vicissitudes of crises and of wars. One has seen entire nations where millions of these filthy rectangles were needed to obtain a handful of flour, scarcely enough to postpone death even for a single day. If a fabulous invasion of worms and termites descended upon your homes, in one short month all the signs and emblems of your wealth would be nothing but a heap of dust.

You smile, thinking that those dirty paper clippings can be exchanged for the tangible, desirable, and enjoyable goods of this world. Even in this illusion you reveal your incurable poverty. True wealth is only the effective use of those things that insure life and embellish it. True wealth is liberty, sovereignty, sanity, tranquillity of mind, the possibility and ease of making use of these goods, of understanding them, in

other words, possessing them in their essence and not as a symbolic and legal pretense. If such is the exact meaning of wealth, how little you really possess of what you call your own! The houses you imagine to be yours belong in reality to those who dwell in them and who surrender in compensation a little of that mythical and contingent wealth that is paper money. The fields you call yours, belong in great part by right of sweat to those who cultivate them, and in another way to the poets and the painters who are able to discover and reveal their beauty. Your industries make it possible for multitudes to live, and yet you can use only the minimum of what they produce, because you in turn must surrender the products to others who pay you a little of those same vain little papers for which you are so greedy. Actually, all that you can consider as your own property is the room in which you live, the bed in which you sleep, the food you stuff down your throat, and the clothes that cover you. And, in as much as you cannot, at one time, inhabit more than one house, sleep in more than one bed, wear more than one suit of clothes, nor gulp down at one meal a herd of calves nor a flock of chickens, the result is that you do not possess any more than the majority of mankind, even those of humble station. Your property can be immense in paper contracts and titles, but it is immense only in the vanity of imagination, since what you can actually use and enjoy is no greater than that of the common people.

The trees of the forest that appear to belong to you belong, in reality, to the birds that make their nests there, to the passer-by who enjoys the loveliness of their leaves and the music of their rustling, to the beggar who finds at their feet dry branches with which to light his fire. The rare, precious

books that you keep locked in your libraries have no real value as long as they are not read, understood, and admired. The famous paintings that you hang on your walls belong, more than to you, to those who know how to look at them, savor them, describe them, really make them their own with the eye and with the spirit. You are nothing but temporary consignees, fearful custodians of these treasures; you fancy you possess them, but they are yours only through an ever-contested legal form. If, according to the ancient definition, property is the use and abuse of goods, you have only the minimum proportion of these goods, while law, custom, and fear prevent you more and more from abusing them.

More wretched still is your position if, looking above and beyond your slavish ostentation and criminal display, we consider the disadvantages and treacheries to which your illusive riches expose you. In order to safeguard, administer, fructify, increase, and defend your patrimony, you must employ a host of subordinates who usually loathe you and cheat you. Hence you are condemned to perpetual distrust, a gnawing uneasiness of mind, the continual fear of disloyalty, to the terror of lies and evil tongues. Your servants have only contempt for you, your imitators envy you, your heirs secretly await your death.

That same wealth, by its weight and pressure, is a constant threat. Everyone wants to snatch or extract as much as he can of it from you. Thieves rob you, swindlers defraud you, brigands strip you, plunderers prey upon you, the public treasury seizes you with its claws. And notwithstanding how invulnerable your greed may often be, you are not always able to resist the entreaties of the destitute, the collectors for charity, the levies of public and private philanthropy. Flatterers

and parasites succeed in extorting from you more than you would wish, charlatans besiege you, the failures in life take some of what you have, women make you pay a fancy price for their so called "favors," your passion for hangers-on, and for titles, forces you to pay political tribute; corruption and ambition compel you to open your purse to every variety of blackmail.

Added to all this is the hatred of the common people, the grudging envy of the *nouveau riche*, the schemes of the demagogues, the open hostility of revolutionaries, the threat of seizure and confiscation. Everyone wants things from the wealthy man, but no one loves him. The greater his wealth, the more he must distrust the love of his woman, the affection of friends, the loyalty of underlings, the sentiments of those who surround him, the very safety of his life.

But more miserable still is the misery of the life of the spirit. The life of the contemporary rich is made up of fever and war: fevers of fear and rancor, wars of protection and annexation. Almost never can they succeed in being gladdened by the lovely serenity of the sky, a flowering field, the knowing delight of work born of the union of talent and will, or the hidden and sublime satisfaction of an idea that may open new worlds. The ecstasies of nature and art, ecstasies second only to that of faith, are unknown to the rich, whose heads are full of other cares—the Bourse listings, market prices, rates of exchange, worry over investments, crises taxes. Seldom is a rich man susceptible to poetry, and I tell you that not to appreciate the poets is one of the lowest forms of poverty.

This is your desolation, rich men, your obvious and insolvent desolation, which is both the daily punishment for your



## TO THE RICH

mismanagement and your hopeless delusion of being rich. Your tangible wealth is not so much to blame for this evil condition, as is the mindless illusion of believing yourselves well-off and seeking to increase your chimeric and punitive wealth by every means. You will be unhappy and persecuted until with your own free will you change and become seekers of love and beauty. You will not be truly rich until you realize, with great humility of spirit, that you are the most demented of the poor.

Your tormented state fills me with pity, but I would suffer still more if it were not the cause of such destruction and horrible desolation. You give to all the world an example of such insatiable cupidity for money and profits that it stirs up and corrupts even the poorest among men. It is so easy for you, thanks to money, to stain public opinion to your color, to turn the resolutions of the politicians and leaders to your advantage. Without wishing to appear so, you are the secret masters of the State. The calamities of nations do not afflict you because you always find a way to live off deaths, to stuff yourselves at the expense of the hungry, to fatten your purses on poverty. While the poor fight and die, you sell munitions and provisions to the armies; while the poor agonize with the wide-spread want, you monopolize the necessities of life to sell them at usurers' prices; while the homes of the multitude fall and burn, you go into the business of ruins and ashes, and if tomorrow there were to be an epidemic of suicides you would hasten to buy up the market on poison and nooses.

You struggle to increase your wealth in the hope that it may be an insurance against death, and may assure you, even in hard times, impunity and immunity. But just as you are lacking in imagination, as well as in poetry and charity, your

calculation is also wrong in this. Your wealth, and especially the methods you employ to increase it, attract the hatred of the multitude. Your indifference toward the distress and anguish of your neighbors, your avarice that often blinds you and turns you to stone, your short-sightedness that sees only the self alone as the center of matter, make you detestable and detested. For you too, and perhaps especially for you, is the divine paradox true, the paradox according to which he who would save his own life must lose it. The poor are patient, the humble defenseless, the just resigned, but perhaps the day is not too remote of savage warfare of the thin against the fat, the empty stomachs against the full bellies. On that day many injustices will be accomplished, many crimes perpetrated, but even these injustices and crimes will be in large measure your fault. If the doctrine which denies to you such privileges as you enjoy continues to spread among all people, the first cause of such dissemination is your own puerile vanity, your nonfulfillment of promises, your lack of conscience, your contagious delirium of appropriation. The passionate greed for wealth breeds war, the unjust hegemony of wealth promotes revolutions. Wars and revolutions bring complete anemia and impoverishment to the material order, blindness and poison to the spiritual order. The misery that the world endures because of you is not expiated enough by your unhappiness, nor even by your stupid blind misery. No one, least of all you, could accuse Christ of a lack of love when He turned to you saying: "Woe unto you rich, because you have your consolation."<sup>1</sup>

What, then, is this mysterious consolation that is synonymous with malediction? You know it: it is pride born of your

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke 6:24.

insane belief that you possess that which is not in reality yours. Fearful consolation that will be cut short by the arrival of the divine thief in the dead of night, when creatures and souls are buried in the shadows and do not expect him. That night approaches and it will be the darkest night of all, a night of bloody gloom and storm. Woe unto them who ere that night approaches have not sought a different consolation.

If you would save yourselves and come to the help of the world—the world that because of you is in agony—free yourselves from the evil charm that ensnares you in its web; enrich yourselves with the spirit of poverty, that poverty which is not wretchedness, but freedom and joy. When Christ advised you to renounce all your worldly goods, it was not only to expedite your journey to the Kingdom of Heaven, but to give you an immediate release from the afflictions and punishments that oppress you. You do not always perceive, in the errors of imaginary ownership, that riches mean risk and servitude, but your own countenances reveal it.

I do not exhort you to sell all your goods, because that in itself presupposes buyers as rich as yourselves; but I do exhort you to abdicate from your domination, to root out your greed for increment, to have a more generous justice toward the workers, to have charity for all. Only by giving up a large share of what you believe is yours will you assure yourselves of what you need for your life. When you have acquired an inner freedom and, above all, a love for your less fortunate brothers, you will be vastly, immeasurably richer than today you dream of being. Only by becoming like the poor, can you dissolve your perilous misery. And only when you are as the poor, will the Church of Christ receive you with love, and not as today it receives you because of custom and necessity.

## THE LETTERS OF POPE CELESTINE VI

In spite of the fact that the Son of God was stern with you, do not believe that He wished to deny you His pity or exclude you from His glory. Estranged and haughty as you are, you are still my sons, and I love you equally as I do my other sons. Just because I love you, I have wanted to unveil your eyes and point out to you the truth, the truth that no one sees, or dares not tell you. Your folly angers me, but your unhappiness saddens me. If my words seem bitter to you, do not forget that from your actions flow the bitterness of tears and the redness of blood. However, even you are men, you too have a soul within the flesh, and among you is he who calls or believes himself a Christian. Let your hearts be moved with compassion for all those who suffer because of you, have pity too on your own poor souls that know not the most perfect and purest joys. If you are not fashioned of the same stuff as your vaults, raise yourselves up at last for the conquest of that incommensurable richness that is love. Not only by measured alms, but through joyous renunciation can you be redeemed and redeem. I also love you with the fearful anguish of a father who suffers for all his sons, but I cannot give to you the kiss of peace until you have restored peace to all the poor whom your wretchedness makes even more miserable.

Pope Celestine VI

Servant of the servants of God

## CHAPTER VI

### TO THE POOR

*My brothers,*

*my sons,*

I TURN to you with more confiding tenderness than to other men, because I too am one of you. You know that I was born of the poorest family, of humble though not ignoble origin. My ancestors, from the earliest records, were poor people whose meager bread and rough clothes were the reward of hard work. As a student, and later as a priest, I lived among you, as one of you. I shared your hardships and your joys. At first hand, I learned your weaknesses, your strength, your sorrows. When God called me to the dignity of the Triple Crown, I did not forget that my King, whose kingdom is not of this world, loved the poor, dwelt among them, and that to them more than to all the others He promised eternal bliss. Finding myself, even though unworthy, the Vicar of that King, I am and consider myself the father of all men, but with more eager solicitude, the father of you poor, because Christ Himself said that in your likeness He would remain among us. I have never forgotten you, I have ever sought to do that which the Gospel commands and my heart inspires me to do. I welcomed you with a more joyful countenance than do the mighty who only ask of you obedience and reverence. I live in a vast palace, but nothing, absolutely nothing can I call mine. My table is no better stocked than

yours; my clothes have no other luxury beyond their immaculate whiteness. The golden Triple Crown that weighs upon my head in solemn ceremonies symbolizes in my eyes the joint reign of humility, brotherhood, and love.

But I am also obliged to tell you, in the name of Christ, that the beatitude promised you can not be a simple and natural result of poverty. It is not true that the Church consoles the poor with the mirage of happiness in the next world the better to insure the too worldly bliss of the rich. You, too, can and should be happy in this world before you enjoy that of Heaven, but to obtain this immediate felicity it is not enough to be laborers, deprived of possessions and money. First, before anything else, you must accept your poverty with a joyful spirit rather than with resignation since, I tell you that at this moment you are much richer, here on this earth, than appears to you. And you would be still richer if you could succeed in recognizing and acquiring the true riches. Poverty and penury alone cannot bring that happiness which was offered to you, but which also requires your collaboration.

Christ exhorted the rich to poverty, and He showed a preference for the poor. St. Francis, the most perfect among the imitators of Christ, celebrated his marriage to poverty, and not at all by proxy. Despite such words and such examples, the poor who love their poverty are ever more rare. Most of you endure your lack of money and comforts with bitterness; you curse your own state as the supreme injustice of chance, and you think of nothing else but to free yourselves from it by every legitimate and criminal means, as if it were almost the most shameful of evils. In truth, I tell you that certain ones among you, for tastes, instincts, and thoughts are no

different from the evil rich, and only an inheritance is lacking to balance your wretchedness with theirs.

The querulous intolerance of poverty demonstrates, alas, that Christianity is not alive in the world, not even in you. The beatitude that by human and divine right is yours is bequeathed to you upon one condition: a voluntary and profound change of the spirit. If instead you have only lamentation and nostalgia and the desire for worldly riches, you will always be poor, and merit nothing but poverty.

Without wordy circumlocution, I have already told the rich what I think of them, of their misery, and of their faults. I have said what they must do for you so that the injustices which crush and offend you may disappear. God gave the earth to all the sons of Adam, and it is the Divine Will that all men, thanks to work, may enjoy its fruits. If, because of natural difference, perfect equality among men will never be possible, the inequalities due solely to the execrable disorder of human society must be minimized and annulled. You, the impoverished and the mendicants, must also be admitted equally with the others to the feast that God has prepared for all men on this marvelous and generous earth.

But equality and abundance are still not the fullness of happiness. On every side you can see gloomy masters and millionaires who are uneasy. The essence of happiness is elsewhere. You, too, as well as the rich, are the victims of the confusion of values and the prejudices of the mind. The real goods of man are not, as the ingenuous, simple-minded common people believe, whether they be rich or penniless, great lands, villas, factories, jewels, silver plate, and paper capital hidden in strong boxes or entrusted to the banks. Indeed, the precious and desirable possessions that bring and main-

tain happiness infinitely more than anything else have little to do with what one can see made of clods of earth, bricks, machines, or with the engraved and numbered paper money that is used in the daily exchange of material goods. They are, as you once knew and no longer know, good health, peace of conscience, serenity of spirit, goodness of heart, spontaneous joy of character, and the ability to understand and enjoy the beauties of nature and the creations of art. Not all of these advantages and substantial riches are denied to all of you, or at least they are not inaccessible to him who seeks them with eager intelligence and honest pertinacity. No one, not even the most miserable beggar, is denied the enlightening power of nature nor the all-healing consolation of love. Peace in the love of God and of all men, joy in contemplation and in poetry are genuine treasures denied to no one, and he who has these things within himself, by right of birth and attainment, has no need to envy the moguls, the nabobs; on the contrary, without fear of boastfulness, he can even pity them in their misery.

In my far-off youth, I recall having lived among the very poorest parishioners who piece by piece earned the rough food that was scarcely enough to sustain them. But seldom since then have I ever seen people more content and more joyful than these. The songs which they sang as they worked lightened their burden; these improvised melodies enlivened their holidays and fiestas; the full songs of the young and old rose from the woods and from the pastures, from the tilled fields and from the smoke-blackened huts. Jolly stories and ancient tales animated their conversations; a simple Mass in a humble church was an occasion; a pilgrimage to a rustic shrine hidden among the mountains was a holiday; a little



## TO THE POOR

fair in a tiny village was a festivity; a modest dance on the threshing floor was a celebration; a wedding banquet enlivened by improvised chords seemed a feast for the gods. It took almost nothing to make them happy: an ingenuous doggerel, a tale of exploits or miracles, a pretty colored scarf, a pair of new shoes, the birth of a lamb or a calf. God was never forgotten, not even in the commonest discourse. The felicity of their days began and ended with prayers to the Virgin and with thanksgiving to the Creator.

I am speaking to you of folk long dead, of far-off times, remote, vanished, departed. Only because of my extreme age can I offer it as genuine testimony. But today I know people who live with incomparably more abundant food and more comforts than these simple folk that I remember, nevertheless in them I perceive only dismal looks, wrinkled foreheads, faces that mirror only sadness and gloom. They do not laugh, but at most smirk; no one sings any longer nor knows poetry; they read the newspapers with contempt and try in vain to stifle their ennui by listening to barbarous music or by inattentively reading the novels of accomplished misdeeds and illicit love affairs. The decline of spontaneous gaiety is apparent not only among the poor, but alas, also among the so-called "well-off." They enjoy a good home, a good table, good clothes, a good living, nevertheless they have a haughty withdrawal more melancholy than that of a persecuted debtor. They complain of everything and of everyone, and only succeed in smothering their boredom by resorting to bestial amusements or shameful pleasures.

In truth, men have forgotten or lost the true scale of values. They no longer realize that simple joy is a wealth far more valuable than minted and engraved gold. The poor peasants

of my youth were much more richly endowed than the moneyed men of our days.

Of course, it is true that in that era that today seems almost mythical, even though it is forever alive in my memory, there was not yet precipitated upon us that cesspool of dark adversity that has embittered every spirit. But the inner resources of man, the only ones upon which he can depend, should manifest themselves precisely at the times of the most inimical desolation. The deeper the gloom, the more they should be resplendent; the icier the climate, the hotter they should flame; the stronger the tide of infamy, the higher must they rise.

Among the poor there still survives some form of spiritual wealth: the greater is the universal need, the readier you are to help your brothers. Men and women of heart, when all seems lost, are brought closer together in the attics and garrets rather than in the villas and palaces. You who have known hunger through experience never refuse to divide your bread with those more starved than yourselves. Of the very little that you possess, you are more generous, in proportion, than the rich with their abundance.

But there are those who, through laziness or mismanagement of life, fall into indigence and who not only complain more than is just, but demand much and expect much with importunate effrontery. Poverty, in these, is the alibi for laziness or the weapon of blackmail. At the same time, these are the least worthy of compassion, and the most discontented among the poor. They even dishonor, if it could be dishonored, divine poverty.

Envy often enters into the enmity toward the rich; this is a sin, and as all sins, results in punishment. I have already

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pointed out to the rich how little they deserve envy; I say to you that you do not deserve the wealth of poverty if your spirit resembles that of the rich. Among you are the poor who hate poverty as the rich hate it, and who, like the rich, esteem money as the only wealth, who long for nothing but that mortifying and insubstantial possession. Just as there are the evil rich, so also are there the evil poor, those who are not worthy of being poor, of attaining that happiness and dignity that God grants even to the most miserable.

Why do you complain so much? You, too, possess, as do all human creatures, the goods essential to existence. You have two eyes with which you can discover and contemplate the innumerable marvels of the earth and the heavens; you have two feet to take you where the air is purer, where love calls you; you have two hands that permit you to imitate God in His creative power; you have a heart able to withstand millions and millions of pulsations without tiring, a heart capable of recognizing Christ in His creatures, capable of loving everything in the world that is beautiful and worthy of love; an intelligence swifter than light that rises above every limit of space and time, that enkindles itself in the search for reality and blazes in the truth.

Why do you, with such ignorant stupidity, crave gold and jewels? Raise your eyes to the serene evening sky where the constellations glitter, more vivid and more glowing than any jewelers' sapphires. Go out into a meadow at dawn, and every leaf has a dewy pendant that sparkles like the purest diamonds of the imperial crowns. Pluck a wild rose, look at it against the sun, and you will see a crimson more burning than that of rubies. There is no need to be a professional artist to enjoy the treasures of creation; you need only some ray of

natural poetry in your soul; indeed, it is from the people of the poor that our poets often arise.

Do not say that the hard work and troubles of daily life do not permit the necessary rest for the enjoyment of the spirit. There is no day laborer, no beggar, who has not one hour at the end of the day, one day of freedom at the end of the year for the cultivation of the spirit, for looking at the sky, reading a page, listening to music.

The humblest and most obscure men have within their reach and at their service the greatest geniuses that have enriched the senses and the minds of mankind, those geniuses that not even kings knew or wanted in their palaces. Genius provides for all, masterpieces of truth and beauty that can fill the driest spirits to overflowing with innocent joy.

More than princes in their castles, every man is a master, for when he wishes to enjoy liberation from woes in a song he has the poets at his command. Blind Homer opens to you the roaring magnificence of the sea and the forests; the rustic Virgil makes you feel the sweetness and goodness of bucolic toil; the exile Dante accompanies you to that sublime homeland that is Paradise; the insane Tasso teaches you the divine wisdom of the heroes; the captive Cervantes leads you to the divine liberty of madness.

If you wish to take part in the tragedies of human suffering and human error, here are Aeschylus, Sophocles, Shakespeare, and Racine, who have depicted them for you. If you wish to penetrate into the secrets of the universe, Plato, St. Augustine, Galileo, and Newton will come to your aid.

Do you love music? Not only have the most inspired composers listened for you to the most celestial and majestic harmonies of the universal soul, but the entire world around

## TO THE POOR

you is festive with song. The wind among the leaves sings for you a symphony of spring and the melodious elegy of autumn. The birds sing for you the awakening of the sun and the flowers, the immortal recollection of love. The thunder of the hurricane evokes for you the solemn crescendo of the angry sky; the hum of the sea buffeted by the southwest wind exalts you with its powerful chorus of primordial chaos.

There is no far corner of the earth that does not present kingly and royal riches, hidden to the distracted and the blind, but prodigally offered to the pure in heart. In the shy and misty hours of the morning, even the most silent and solitary street has its magnificence if you walk along it with the blessed spirit of thanksgiving. Those humble cottages encircled by cracked and stained walls, and roofed with black tiles, are, in truth, havens of peace for tired men. Within, closed in sleep, are the clear eyes of poor children who are dreaming dreams of quieting splendor; there are the women who arise early, before everyone else, to keep alight the domestic divinity of the fire. One need not travel too far: the meanest corner in a suburb has traces of the very first paradise. The pale daisy has in its center a golden eye wreathed with snowy brows; a blue cuplike flower raises its head even in the most miserable filth; the puddle of dirty water sparkles in the morning sunlight like a fairy mirror; the half-open anemone modestly accepts the wind's caress.

Every man is rich, if he so desires. All the universe is his uncontested and common property. All is yours, from the stars that have been shedding their light for centuries, so that it might reach you tonight, to the stone with its marble veining and streaks of silver, which your foot kicks aside but which gleams to your eyes. The child that passes near by re-

freshes your withered spirit; the sight of the aged can make you feel more keenly the angelic gift of youth; the leaves that fall are a carpet for your footsteps; the call of a far-off trumpet restores your courage; the rain is a heavenly promise to satiate your thirst and hunger.

In truth, I say to all of you who are poor in fortune and poor in spirit, that man is a demigod who no longer recognizes his Eden, a forgetful Croesus who no longer knows how to count his riches, a landowner who does not know the limitless boundaries of his domain, a lazy reader who no longer knows how to spell out the poem of the universe, an heir who does not stoop to gather his immense inheritance, an abdicated king who is no longer able to see his scepters in the hoe, the hammer, and the pen, his crown in the poetry of life, his kingdom in the great and marvelous earth.

I speak to all of you, but in particular to you for whom a little love and a little poetry are sufficient to make you truly the richest of the rich. You are poor only because you do not know how to be rich, resembling the rich who do not perceive that they are poor.

Do not be surprised that a Pope discourses at such length on poetry. David was not ashamed to be a poet; should I, who am so much less than David, refrain from pointing out to you a path of redemption even in poetry? Do not believe that in speaking in such a manner I forget the God who chose me as His Vicar. In His earthly manifestation, Christ was also a poet as well as a teacher of happiness, a herald of joy, a revealer of beauty. He came among us not only to offer His blood to redeem our sins, but also to teach a new form of happiness, one of more enduring and satisfying wealth. Christ denounced the rich because they seek wealth which is

## TO THE POOR

not wealth; He called the poor to Himself to entrust to them the treasures that no thief can steal, that time cannot destroy. He loved the children more than the sages because in every child there is still alive the poet that the adult almost always seeks to extinguish, without perceiving that it is decide, a crime far worse than suicide.

I promise you not only the Kingdom of Heaven that awaits you after death, but I also open to you that kingdom of heaven that glorifies the earth for the perennial consolation of the lovers of Christ. If you could learn how to become master of this kingdom, you would be still more worthy to ascend into the other. The tremendous love that I feel for you in my old heart of a poor man makes me hope that my words will not be vain soundings of a cymbal but a challenging help for your ascension. The only real wealth is love. Love God in His creations and in His creatures; love all men, even your enemies; love the spirit of poverty that likens you to Christ and you will no longer suffer from your poverty. Only then, on that day, according to the irrevocable promise, will more be given unto you.

Pope Celestine VI

Servant of the servants of God

## CHAPTER VII

### TO THE ADMINISTRATORS OF THE PEOPLE

*My brothers,*

*my sons,*

I TURN to you neither to beg your help nor to challenge your rights. I have no need of your help, because it concerns the material world over which I have no control. My rights, superior to yours, are endowed by the power of Christ, and are set forth once and forever in the New Testament.

Often the Church has seen in you, the servant-masters of men, its warriors, its rivals, or its vassals. But I, instead, look upon you as unhappy men needing compassion, and groping experimenters needing guidance.

I do not want your armies, for, outside of God, I fear no one. I do not seek your alliance, which has almost always been execrable to the Church. The Church's strength will always be the love of the meek and not that profanity of religion, "*instrumentum regni*." If the Church is founded and willed by God, no persecution can undermine it, no human force can destroy it. And if God grants or wills that I shed my blood, it signifies that He endowed my poor blood with a value of exchange and ransom.

But nor do I consider you my enemies. Although you may



hate me and oppose me, I have both the duty and the instinct to love you.

Nor do I pretend that the princes and heads of nations are subject to me as vassals. Because all the earth belongs to God, it would be right and just if it were governed by the Vicar of Christ; but such a dominion must be prepared for by the change and conversion of spirits, founded upon the will and consent of the people. It cannot be merely an ideal proclamation, or worse still, the selfish and hypocritical homage of sovereigns. I would want to govern all hearts, not, as in former times, to be the high feudatory of untrustworthy feudal lords.

I am the Vicar of Christ, and it is my duty to think in accordance with the Gospel. Christ refused the offer that Satan made to Him to become lord of all the kingdoms of the earth, and later, He refused to be made a king. He preferred that crown of thorns that no revolution can disturb; on the contrary, the wilder the storm, the firmer it remains upon the head, since the thorns press more deeply into the temples.

Christ commanded us to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's. But what was it He ordered us to render? A small metallic disk that bore the imprint of a man's profile: a little less than nothing. To God instead we must give the whole soul, the soul which is quite different from any other minted coin, the soul made in the image of the Creator, the soul that bears imprinted upon it the figure of the Man-God and is worth infinitely more than all the money that is spewed forth from your mints.

When Satan offered to Jesus the kingdoms of the earth, he was not a complete braggart if it is true, as St. Paul tells us, that the earth belongs to the "prince of this world." In a

way, you could then be considered the vicars of Satan; but if your stewardship stems from such a terrible master, you must render an account of it to a quite different Master. Men will be obliged to obey you as long as they will not completely obey Christ. Your reign is the punishment of disobedience. It arose from a denial. Your rule becomes necessary because of sin; it has its major foundations in the perfidy of the many and the cowardice of all. If men lived according to the laws of the Father, and loved each other in the love of the Son, there would no longer be any need of judges, armies, leaders. Mankind would manage well without all of you, without those who wear the purple and the ermine, as well as without those who wear the formal coat or a soldier's uniform. The genius of St. Augustine pointed out that God permitted the authority of kings in order to restrain the evil instincts of man, that is, that temporal powers are, in origin, one of the more mortifying consequences of original sin. After the Fall, man became a thief and a murderer, an imitator of Cain, a follower of Cacus; thus it was necessary to raise up powerful men over nations, to whom it is even permitted to resort to theft and assassination to prevent or punish the thievery and killings of individuals. Hence you are needed, but often, for many of your subjects, needed in the same way as a subduer of savage beasts, a jailer for delinquents, a guard for prisoners, a strait-jacket for the insane. If men could renounce their bestiality and become Christians, you would immediately be superfluous, undesirable, finished.

When all men take advantage of the freedom of the Son of God, your reign will be over. Then there will be only one guide, the delegate that Christ appointed on this earth. And the Pontiffs, no longer eclipsed by your shadow that appears

gigantic only because of the twilight of the world, could pre-side at last over the promised kingdom of heaven.

We are still far from that day, and in the meantime you must exist and rule, be obeyed and make yourselves obeyed. But do not become arrogant because of this. Do not imagine yourselves to be above other men merely because your profiles are worn down by the thumbs of money-changers, and your images struck with the dirty cancellation stamps of the mail. You are not, as perhaps you imagine and as your flatterers pretend to believe, the real masters of the earth, but in truth only the temporary and insecure guardians of changeable laws, of changing borders, of fickle tribes. During life you must render account to the people; and after death, to God. If you are good, you are the servants and the victims of your subjects; if evil, you live in terror and die in infamy. Despite your clumsy and overbearing vanity, you are, more often than not, nothing but dressed-up mannikins in the hands of the clique that supports you as the ropes of the gallows support the hanged man.

In spite of the shaky power of rulers, your responsibility is great. You do not give enough heed to the voices of your people, you do not think enough of the miseries, the anguish, the distress, the anxieties of the poor, humble, exhausted people who crowd your cities; you do not know how to hear, in the night and in silence, the groans and the curses raised against you and yours. You oppress even the poor, disgust even the patient, incage even the solitary, and send even the innocent to the slaughterhouse. In order to legalize your sacrifice of the multitudes, there are people who provide you with speeches, myths, slogans, theories, and handsomely colored banners. But not all the people are satisfied with loud

noises and trumpet blasts; not forever can the high-sounding formulas replace bread and peace. With the excuse of saving your citizens' lives, you burden them with such an excessively heavy load that even life itself becomes a punishment no longer worth defending.

Often you are the finest actors and conjurers. Well do you know how to hide the bloodstains beneath the purple robe, the claws beneath the velvet gloves, the satyr's hoofs within the bully's boots, the wolfskin under the uniform. But alas, you lack one of the highest faculties of man: imagination. You believe you are loved when you are tolerated, you believe you are feared when you are hated, you believe you are being glorified when you are being fawned upon. But above all, you cannot conceive of what your reign could become if, instead of being vicars of Satan who vainly pronounce the name of God, you remembered at times, and not only for the sake of convenient oratory, to be Christians. Despite the wisdom of your advisers, your *raison d'état*, your wealth, your haughty pride, your armies—look at the fearful state into which you have led the entire world. There are those who believe that a very few men, that is, you and you alone, are responsible for such ruin and such anguish. That is not true, but it is terribly true that your share of the guilt is far greater than that of the priests.

God tolerates and grants your power, as an imperfect remedy for the imperfect salvation of mankind, but He will not forgive you for all the sobs, the blood, the weariness, the hate, the hardships, the desolation that stain the pages of your annals. You will pay, and you will begin to pay from this moment. You are guilty, but you are also unhappy. In spite of everything, the strongest emotion that you arouse

in me is pity. Every day, beneath your sumptuous trappings, I perceive your pitiable misery. You pay for crumbs of power with cartloads of slavery; you pay for the vanities of majesty with the sharp stings of fear and suspicion. The servility of those who surround you, degrading rather than serving, feeds your illusion of power and nourishes your arrogance. Arrogance is more intoxicating than strong wine; drunkenness leads to inbecility or rages; in other words, to insanity, which is collapse and death.

The temptations of pride, of caprice, and of overbearing conduct are more excusable in you because they are assisted by facility and impunity. Your punishment consists in the impossibility of ever satisfying the people, who are by nature inherently unrelenting, infractious, and riotous. You are punished by the envy, the scorn, the silent loathing of your subjects, who many times become your executioners. You are punished by the ennui of forced speeches, by ignorance of the true feelings of others, by the treachery of those very ones whom you have benefited.

In truth, you inspire in me an immense sadness. And because you are my enemies, even though you do not know it, I love you. And because I love you, I want to make your lot less hard. I want to teach you what all know but all forget: one can be happy only by making others happy. How can you be loved if your power, by force of circumstances, is almost always presented to the people in the forms of intimidation, threat, and punishment? Many men recognize your governments only in the form of policemen, prison-keepers, executioners, officers of assessment and regimentation, public tax-collectors, inquisitors, requisitors, prohibitors. Hence, the State appears to the masses as a Leviathan that has only

one organ—a belly; a Polyphemus whose only organ is its mouth; a Briareus whose hundred arms are used for seizing and repelling; an ogre in ambush that snatches money, liberty, and life, even from innocent citizens.

You should think less of the geographic and political grandeur of your states, and a little more, much more, of the contentment of their inhabitants. Redoubling your territory sometimes means only the redoubling of the number of those that curse you. You have seen the catastrophes that have resulted from greed for land and power. Be less invidious, less despotic, less tyrannical, and you will have made the masses immeasurably less destitute, for there is no wealth more valuable than serenity of spirit.

And if your temperament and your dignity do force you into war, in the name of God, make war against poverty, war against imbecility, war against cruelty, war against the ignorance of the educated, and war against the barbarities of the civilized.

You must not give heed only to the preparation of peaceful citizens, trained soldiers, servants, and resigned acolytes. You must cooperate with the Church of Christ in the “metanoia”<sup>1</sup> which is the only hope that remains to men to lead them to safety from out of this inferno of fire and blood. The chief use of your power should be the de-bestializing and de-barbarizing of mankind, that alteration and redemption of the spirit; in short, that “metanthropy” which is above all politics, all knowledge, all reforms, all systems, and all regimes, for only a transformation of heart will change the fate of men, individually and collectively. Only by the complete and effective realization of a few verses of the Gospel will

<sup>1</sup> Transformation.

man be able to erase the major part of the present calamity, only then will he enter into a more bearable life, a life more nobly human because it will be more heroically divine. Do not exhibit yourselves to people only in the garb of tax collectors and butchers, as scarecrows and fetiches; be rather educators, re-educators, reformers, rebuilders of the spirit. You have powerful tools in your hands; tremendous achievements could be accomplished by them who would model themselves upon the great. Be spiritual alchemists, cultivate the white magic of sublimation. Be shepherds of the people, not so much to keep the wolves and tigers from devouring the lambs and the sheep, but so as to lead back the wolves and tigers into a more peaceful communal life. Exert all your strength, used heretofore for the preparation of the Apocalypse, toward the transmutation of souls, toward the joy of hearts, toward the victory of Christ. When this is accomplished, you will be discarded as superfluous custodians of people: but, perhaps, are you not also now unhappy and imprisoned? Do you not realize, perhaps, that the guards of a prison are as confined as the convicts?

Hence, I do not ask you to be vassals of the Church, but I would want you to be collaborators of the Vicar of Christ, so that Christ may free you too from the yoke and remorse of power. Do not tell me that I am speaking here of a dream, that I am raving, crazed by the love of the impossible. Are you too not dreamers, who dream of ruling? Was not the blond horseman of Bucephalus spurred on by a dream, even to the rivers of India? Were they not dreams, the empires of Augustus and Charlemagne, though dreams worthy of realization? Did not the empires of Genghis Khan and of Akbar vanish like dreams with the appearance of dawn? Do you not

know that it is far better to suffer and die for a dream than to live and grow fat in criminal mediocrity?

But Christ is not a dream. Today we have proof that human sagacity plunges the people into the Tartarus of every madness. The madness of the Gospel will make us free; that is, happy. Within a century either the world will be Christian or it will be destroyed.

You too, servants disguised as monarchs, are called to accept your "mansion" in the accomplishment of salvation, the universal "metanoia."

I ask neither the favor of your protection nor the homage of your vassalage. You are guilty, and I am ready to forgive you. You are unhappy, and I have compassion for you. You are my enemies, and for that very reason I love you.

I ask you only to rediscover, under the tattered lace of majesty, your human heart, your poor human heart, your forgotten and poisoned heart. Reflect upon your fearful glory, upon your lost happiness, think of the multitudes that Lucifer has entrusted to you and that must be returned to God. Do not be ashamed to suffer sometimes, like the saints; like the poets, do not be ashamed at times to dream; and do not be ashamed to weep with me, the last of the Vicars of Christ, for the millions who, in spite of everything, still trust in us.

Pope Celestine VI  
Servant of the servants of God



## CHAPTER VIII

### TO THE CITIZENS AND THE SUBJECTS

*My sons,*

DISPEL INSTANTLY the suspicion that I wish to deliver a sermon to you: even though you seldom come to church, your appetite for orations and declamations never suffers.

Your governors, and still more those who would like to take their posts, in order to assure you finally of your happiness, spare neither the breath nor the voice to obtain your votes or soothe your proclivity to anger. Your leaders have sometimes forced you to do without bread, often without freedom, and almost always without justice, but they have never been miserly with high-sounding eloquence. You have been subjected to many famines, now in one form, now in another—famines of supplies, of order, of honesty—but since the sun shone on the first speaking tribe, you have never known a famine of oratory. The importunate Roman people asked their leaders for bread and circuses, but the only things all the popular leaders distributed with liberal abundance were two: arms and speeches. Arms for killing, speeches for deceiving.

The pity which your subjection stirs in me is far stronger than my scorn which your stupidity arouses. You are men, hence my sons in Christ, and I love you—even though you do not love me. I want to advise you, to help you, and not

merely to intone those beautifully cadenced words so dear to the hearts of the simple-minded and to the talents of the confusion-makers. I want to offer you a drink of health-giving truth—bitter though it may be.

In all the countries of the world throughout all the centuries, you have lived and you now live under the gray and black banner of discontent. Just as one has never heard of a farmer content with his harvest, a laborer content with his wages, a servant content with his master, a master content with his servant, a storekeeper content with his cash receipts, a manufacturer content with his earnings, much less has one ever heard of a citizen or a subject content with his government. In times of hunger or in times of prosperity, in times of peace or in times of war, in times of tyranny or in times of revolution, men have found themselves in agreement on one point only: in blaming, censuring, criticizing, accusing, exacerbating, and hating those who govern them. I look down from on high, from so lofty a mountain that your adventures appear like the scimmages of ants. And I am able to tell you that the insolence and vapidity of the administrators of the people are only equaled by your own fickleness and artlessness of spirit.

Your discontent is just, but ingenuous. Among the administrations, almost all mediocre and some worse than others, one never sees a very good one. Hence, your ingenuousness consists in supposing that a change of flags and captains can bring a greater equity and welfare to them who pay and obey. You all resemble that sick woman who provided Dante with a dolorous image, that sick woman who turned and re-turned in her bed, hoping to ease her pain. Like her, you delude yourselves that you can cure or alleviate your sufferings by

passing from bed to bed in the sultry middle aisle of politics. Perhaps you are even worse off than that ailing woman, who at least knew that her illness was within herself and realized that the change from one side of the bed to the other could give her only a fleeting respite from pain. Instead, you believe that the evil is inherent only in certain particular forms of statutes and laws or in those unworthy and inept persons who rule you; you do not see that that evil is the same intrinsic-essence of every government and of every man.

Your error, innocent in itself but unfortunate in its results, is the opinion that there are radically different systems of government. For example: that you could be governed now by one man alone, now by choice and will of the entire people. The forms of the governments seem many to him who permits himself to be ensnared by the outward show of their façades, but if we examine the permanent structure of the political machine we find it is reduced to but one form: oligarchy. An individual, whether he calls himself king, tyrant, despot, autocrat, or Caesar, cannot succeed in ruling alone without the help and complicity of his group of followers and supporters. Nor, on the other hand, do the people succeed in exercising their full sovereignty even by means of legitimate delegates. Every government, whatever may be its name or its boast, is only the power of a small faction over all the other citizens. A minority, more or less in number but always small in relation to the totality of the nation, with different forms and methods dominates the majority: this is the established design of every government.

The autocrat could not keep going and endure were he not surrounded by the generals who aided him in conquest, by the ministers who are indebted to him for positions and

honors, by the clique of favorites who justify and defend his power: all avaricious people who think more of their own personal careers than of the fortunes or misfortunes of their country. The people, on their side, cannot directly exercise sovereignty as they once did, perhaps in appearance only, in the townships of antiquity where the assembly and the forum could hold all the citizens. Representatives must be chosen, but among those elected there always evolve some confraternities of the bolder and more expert leaders who, with compromises and alternatives, divide the power. Which power, almost everywhere, is nothing but a legal and spectacular pretense because the real masters of the state are, in the last analysis, the powerful capitalists: money capitalists, that is, the banking and industrial magnates; or mob capitalists who are the leaders of the more fortunate factions.

Therefore monarchy is as much of a chimera as pantiocracy. Neither the one nor the many can directly exercise power. In both instances the direction of public affairs falls into a few thousand hands, into an oligarchy more or less restricted and more or less honest, which tends through the natural force of human nature to assure itself revenue, privileges, and immunity, at the expense of all the others.

Each system of oligarchy has its advantages and disadvantages, its apologists and its detractors. What little of good there is in each of these is apparent usually when one begins to suffer from the evils of the opposing system.

Each oligarchy proclaims a government for the glory of the fatherland, for the salvation of the country, for the good of the people, for the progress of "true liberty" and "true civilization." In actual fact, the oligarchies seek above all else to assure themselves the substance and duration of power by

satisfying the appetites of their more useful clientele, by pampering the more awe-inspiring classes, by making life hard for their rivals and opponents, by flapping the banners of the current myths, which are often altered almost as if to conceal the immutability of customs and methods.

Whatever may be the provenance, the theory, the denomination, the number of men who comprise the dominating minority, it remains always of men chosen by men, it consists always of those dependent slaves of wants and of passions, instigated by self-interest or envy, deluded by fantasy and by utopia, victims of errors and fright. They are always those fickle and terrified beings, somewhere between actors and ruminants, who call themselves men. They are the one-eyed led by the blind, or the blind led by the one-eyed. Either man changes his spirit and nature—and woe unto us if he will not change it in the way taught by Christ—or you will forever be governed by those unstable groups of mediocre and frenetic individuals whom by your own mediocrity and frenzy you deserve.

Despite everything, you citizens and you subjects, you are always ready to believe, through guilelessness or discontent, that a change of government can alter your destinies. You have still not learned, for example, that the most famous revolutions of history, after the rages of the conflagrations and the surgings of the floods have quieted down, brought forward nothing new nor better than the same oligarchial and sinful essence of government.

The revolutions are not true and genuine overturnings, but only imitations and repetitions, sometimes deformed almost into burlesques. Almost invariably the revolutions consist merely of a change of personnel from that of the worn-

out oligarchy to that of a bolder and fresher new group, of a change from the now tedious theoretical jargon to one of new or obsolete nomenclature, of a substitution of the existing imperfect laws with others that presently, for similar or opposite motives, will appear equally imperfect. The substance of the conditions remains the same: a political herdsman that leads the herd wherever he pleases and to his own advantage.

For mankind there can be but one, single, authentic, and effective revolution, that inner revolution that Christ announced and promulgated near the Sea of Galilee and the temple of Jerusalem. By comparison, all other revolutions are nothing but actors in disguise, the rearranging of the stage, the whitewashing of scenery, retouchings and marginal notes of the eternal tragi-comedy, with the actors bursting upon the stage in rotation. A poet once said that the only genuine revolution was the universal flood; I say to you rather it will be the complete and loving fulfillment of the Gospel.

Consider: only the halving of self-love, the redoubling of love among men would mean an overturning of human relations, hence the very life of society itself, such as no revolution has ever accomplished or could ever accomplish.

I have spoken all this time not merely to scatter before you the quintessence of political axioms. By a thousand cubits, my desire and my purpose transcend this crude though valid symbol of human society. From the eminence of this thousand-year-old observatory from which the Papacy has watched the rise and fall of so many empires and so many rulers, I am able to discern the true essence of things much better than you can ever discover it, disturbed as you are by self-interests, sentiments, and by elementary and transitory

myths. Moved solely by the love I bear for all of you, by pity for your illusions which are ever betrayed and ever reappear, I have wanted to remind you of certain principles, unfortunate but true, which are not found in your textbooks and newspapers. Not only will they more honestly enlighten your intellect, but more readily turn your hearts toward that truth which alone can make you free.

You know that the Church, as much through pity as wisdom, is disposed to accept or tolerate every form of government that is not openly inimical to the Christian faith and religion. From experience, the Church knows that all governments, when reduced to their essential roots, resemble one another far more than you realize. By secular proofs, the Church knows also that little is accomplished by changing the constitutions, the slogans, the names, the protagonists, and the appearances of governments, because whatever may be the oligarchy that governs you, you are always bound, taxed, oppressed, and sacrificed.

To bring yourselves nearer to liberty and happiness, it is not enough to change the systems: it is necessary to change the spirits and hearts of men, of all men, of the governors and of the governed, of the leaders and of the subjects, of the administrators and of the citizens. The worst feudal system, if applied by wise and honest men, could be a paradise; in the hands of stupid and wicked men, the Republic of Plato could be transformed into a revolting hell. History shows us the ultimate fallacy of all revolutions, because every new state, like the old, continues to take lives, property, and freedom. There remains only one experiment: the spiritual revolution of the Gospel, the "metanoia," the inner upheaval which will make every subject a citizen of the Kingdom of

Heaven, every citizen a brother in the universal confraternity of love. There is only one way to become free: make yourselves Christians. Subjects and citizens, I know your sore distress, your servitude, your affliction, and I have always suffered and I am suffering because of it. I know the weight of the yoke, the horrible taste of the gag, the cold acridity of the bit, the acid stink of the bridle. I sympathize with your impatience, your itch to revolt, your yielding to fantasy and to utopia. I want to cure you, to save with the paradisaical silver nitrate of truth. You expect too much from politics and not enough from religion. Because of laziness you expend the minimum effort: it is far easier to change the form of the government than to change the quality of the spirits of all citizens. It is a much pleasanter and more convenient undertaking to place all the blame upon the backs of your servant-masters rather than take your share of it upon yourselves and destroy it.

You give in too readily to usurpers, but are taken in too easily by impostors. You endure too much from certain unworthy sovereigns, and then you drink heavily from the filthy decanters of charlatans. For years and years, in silence you tolerate acts of tyranny, lies, injustices, and outrages; but then suddenly when you revolt you are more ferocious than savage beasts.

You have no right to rebel unless you rebel against error that darkens your mind, against sin that bends and softens the choice of your will. Too often your intolerance is born of vanity and envy, your thirst for justice springs from the black desire for revenge, and your rebellion at times is the convulsive spasm of a disease that is not outside you but within you.



TO THE CITIZENS AND THE SUBJECTS

For you too, there is no hope of salvation outside of the Gospel. Either you will learn to become Christians with a rich understanding of triumphal love, or you will be dragged, for centuries and centuries, from shackle to shackle and from slaughterhouse to slaughterhouse until the day of the universal and voluntary massacre.

Christ, who willed to be born the subject of an emperor and is now worshiped as the King of Kings, awaits you from the summit of His cross, so that you too may share in the true nature of the perfection of His redemption.

Pope Celestine VI

Servant of the servants of God

## CHAPTER IX

### TO THE WOMEN

#### *Daughters,*

DO NOT BE SURPRISED if a Vicar of Christ addresses a word to you. Do not be downcast if, at the moment, the word seems harsh to you. You represent more than half of the human race, and you too have your share of the guilt in the overturning and breaking up of the world. This guilt can be forgiven only on condition that you do not deny it.

You have suffered, and you suffer, perhaps more than men or at least equally with them, but not all your pain is gratuitous or unjust. They who are guilty to a horrible degree for the last storm of calamities are your sons, your husbands, your lovers, they who have come from your womb, have drunk your milk, have slept in your beds. You are, almost always, the slaves of men, but your maternity and sensuality give you great power over them. You are, at one and the same time, slave and master. If your slavery warrants exoneration and pity, you must also render an account of your almost universal power over children and adults. You are breeders and dominators of males, and for that very reason you must do no less than answer to God for some share of the evil perpetrated by males. You are all victims, but at the same time not entirely innocent. Hence, you too are called upon for the expiation of the massacre and for the restoration of law and light.

## TO THE WOMEN

I do not wish to be bitter, and I cannot be bitter with you. Too well do I know that you are extolled by men's words and debased by their actions. They rarely have known how to elevate you; on the contrary they have almost always succeeded in degrading you. Eve was the first cause of the Fall, but she paid for her sin with the highest price. Not only was she, too, banished from the garden of happiness, but she saw one of her sons drench the earth with his blood, and another son, a fratricide, forever cursed and wandering; she felt beside her during all her life the anguished chagrin and reproachful silence of Adam. In the fullness of time Eve was redeemed by Mary, and not one of us Christians can ever forget what we owe to the Virgin of Nazareth. Women understood, waited upon, and followed Christ more tenderly than men, and they had the privilege of being the first to see the Risen One. Even today you are the most faithful around His altars, and much will be forgiven you because you have loved much and wept much.

I know how humiliating and inconsolable are the lives of many of you. I know the thousands of torments to which you are subjected by the conscienceless and preponderant egotism of the male. I realize the anguish and the torture of mothers, the restlessness and impatience of daughters, the disgusts and fears of brides, the desolation of orphans and widows, the obscure and exhausting life of the peasants and laborers, the servile and degrading life of the poor housewife, the ill-treatment of spinsters, of the betrayed, the abandoned, the trapped, the debased, the fallen, the ruined. Usually men ask of you only servitude and voluptuousness. The most innocent among them demand that you be the incarnations of their dreams, and when they awaken, the demon inside of

them accuses you of not being angels. The impure expect purity of you, the weak take your strength, the restless seek peace in you. First they exalt you to the skies in poetry, and then they condemn you to the hell of indifference and dishonor.

You eat the moldy bread of affliction and drink the lees of the wine of desperation. Nevertheless, even in the most vile among you is some reflection of the maternity of Mary, as in the noblest is some trace of the frailty of Eve. You seem, at times, like serpents that are ever entwined about a cross. In the brilliant Middle Ages—where only the blind see only shadows—your dual nature was a “sign of contradiction.” The poets envisioned you as stairways of light ascending to heaven; the ascetics, as slippery stairways to hell. In our times the poets see only the power of earthly love or the impossibility of perfect love. The ascetics are silent; but if they spoke, perhaps they would arrive at the same merciless conclusions as their predecessors of antiquity.

In truth, I confirm with sorrow that you have collaborated much more in the downfall of mankind than you have in its salvation. Your mad desires for opulence, security, and luxury have abetted man’s feverish greed, which is already too much inclined to the conquest of money. You have preferred the wealthy and the powerful, and hence men have sought ever more ardently for abundant wealth and supremacy in order to vie for the most desirable women, with the results that we all see and know.

You have admired physical exuberance in men more than spiritual vigor; aggressive and homicidal bravado more than intellectual boldness. With such preferences, you have provoked and stimulated every form of violence and war.

## TO THE WOMEN

Mothers hate war as the reaper of sons, but mistresses choose the victorious, even though filthily stained with blood; and alas, though the young men love their mothers, the desire to please their mistresses is much stronger.

Through vanity, fear, or hunger, you easily yield to all conquerors, and hence, you have contributed to making man an ever more pugnacious beast.

Long ago your pity and gentleness of spirit were your glory. But for a long time these sweet virtues, flowering in the sunlight of Christ, have faded. In revolutions, in riots, in guerrilla warfare, you have demonstrated a ferocity wild enough to incite the envy of the Furies.

Christianity exalted you, it sanctified matrimony, it instilled in you the sense and habit of modesty. But in recent times many of you, too many of you, have forgotten and scorned every reticence, have scoffed at modesty and virginity, have lent yourselves to the carnal pleasure of every fornicator. Men hunt men for depredation and murder; you hunt men in order to extort fame, luxuries, gifts, and favors. The number of prostitutes has lessened only because everywhere increases the army of clandestine strumpets, the concubines for a day, the women who can be hired for an hour. It was once your boast that you were lilies and roses in a sheltered garden, but there is no greater stench than that of festering lilies and putrefying roses. So you too are guilty that the earth is every day more stinking and foul-smelling.

The sins of love have always been sins, and they will always be sins. But today you cannot even evoke the romantic sophism of the claims of passion. Love is becoming more and more rarely the plea of the fallen. Now there is no longer anything but the urge and yielding of the flesh; freaks of

whim and affairs of money. You have succeeded in degrading even sensuality.

Outrages that were at one time considered incredible and inconceivable have become in many lands daily and ordinary conduct. Well-born young women are seen accepting, even seeking, the embraces of unknown satyrs. Mothers are seen prostituting their sons, and wives who permit or request their husbands to become domestic panderers. The origin of such shame was not always hunger, but more often the allure of luxury or a perverted curiosity.

It is repugnant to me to examine these obscene facts, but I cannot restrain my indignation when I behold to what point so many of you have befouled that body that should be the temple of the spirit, that spirit that is the house of God.

Not content with selling your bodies to men, you even desire and attempt to become like men. Your sacred purpose and unequaled nobility rested in your maternity, and you have multiplied criminal abortions and voluntary sterility. It was your task to be generators of men, and you have wanted to be apers of men. The home was your undisputed and legitimate kingdom, but instead you have invaded offices and workshops, you have entered the assemblies and tribunes, you have not even feared to descend into the unclean arena of politics. You were entrusted with one of the most sublime duties of human society: the care and education of your sons, the future men. Too often you abandoned them to paid hands, to run to meetings or lascivious spectacles, to athletic contests, to the dark rooms of art, unfortunately no longer silent, to games of every description, to gatherings in the public squares, to dances that are not always virtuous, to the salons of the *haut monde* that are nests of gossip. Ple-

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bian women ape the bad manners of the rich, and the illustrious women become as the rabble. You all desire to imitate your male masters, from their freedom in viciousness to their fashion in clothes. The men, who still preserved some shadow of the chivalrous spirit of the cavaliers of old as long as you were set apart in virginal and maternal dignity, see you now as petulant and disgusting rivals. They desire you but they do not respect you, they win you but they do not adore you, they fear you but they do not defend you. You have sought to release yourselves from masculine slavery, and you have become, more than before, man's pastime and laughing-stock.

If life in our times seems ever more ignoble and more intolerable, the guilt is not all yours, but is due also to the decadence and desertion of many of you. Not all of you. I do not forget nor could I ever forget that there are today too, though increasingly rare, the radiant spirits of women who consecrate themselves to the service of God and the unfortunate ones, to the care of the sick and the wounded, to every work of charity. But their love, though at times heroic, is not compensation enough for the wickedness and treachery of so many of their sisters. Not all the women who devote their days to good works are inspired by the pure love of Christ and of their fellow men. Certain ones—God grant that they are not many—resign themselves to that life of sacrifice in order to escape work considered lower, with the egoistic hope of acquiring secure rights to celestial recompense; because of delusions of profane and mundane emotions; because of lack of robustness or good looks. Nevertheless all these humble women, who accept every sacrifice and are often maternal sisters, deserve our respect and our affection.

I am not unaware that you women who have remained in the world run to church more than your male companions. I am also aware that too often your faith is very far from that which Christ intends, far from the strength and candor that glowed so marvelously in the first Christians. Your religion is frequently mere superstition, your Christianity not seldom tinged with paganism. You assist at the rites through inertia and habit more than because of a real need of the spirit; you take more pleasure in external devotions than in making an effort to follow in your lives the expressed precepts of the Gospel. Your conduct outside of church in your daily life and with your family does not always correspond to the abundance of your genuflections and to the compunction in your prayers. You see the faith as a dispenser of grace and an insurance against repentance and hell rather than as a mastery of truth, the practice of humility, the exercise of charity. Among you there are not a few who confess their sins every week and receive Communion every morning, but not through this do they learn to sweeten their acidity of character, to restrain their slander and stinginess, nor to cease scolding and vituperating against their neighbors. They love the lights of the candelabras and the holy lamps, but they themselves are not sufficiently lighted from within by the loving radiance of Christ. They awaken nearly every morning to the cock's crow, but almost never do they perceive their own daily denial of Christ. Their predilection for idolatry turns them more readily to the Madonna and the Saints, not because they are eager to suffer with the Virgin and burn with the Saints, but because from these who were once human creatures they are confident of obtaining more expeditious assistance and purely human, temporal favors. In short,



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they are hopeful that with a few bits of charity and some thousands of prayers, from the lips rather than from the heart, they can purchase at bargain prices an advantageous spot in paradise. But I say to you that the genuflections and reciting of prayers are not enough to make you true Christians and that one can not be seated at the feast of paradise with only that payment.

But that does not surprise me, for several among you offer to God the leavings of the devil; you resort to the cult of the Virgin when age makes you unfit for the cult of Aphrodite, you beg the charity of the graces of heaven when the graces of youth have abandoned you.

I do not wish to be unjust even with you, but I repeat that you who believe yourselves already in the bright light of the apse are scarcely on the threshold of the sanctuary.

Much more is required of her who wishes, without temerity, to call herself a follower of Christ. There have been women who were wedded to Christ for eternity, and who have celebrated that union with tears, torment, and blood. God accepts no other coin but the fiery sparks of inner perfection and daily charity. Putting calluses on the knees is not enough, if the callousness of sin be not extirpated with groans. Instead, you women seek to bargain with God as you do with the greengrocer and the modiste. You do not remember enough that the Kingdom of God is within you in the depths of your hearts, more than in the black, leather-bound prayer books. Either Christianity is living and effective obedience to the commandments of the Gospel, or it is a deceitful transposition, in Christian language, of Pharisaism.

To you too, women, with heartfelt insistence I repeat what I say to all the men: either we shall have the victory of Christ,

or we shall have the triumph of death. There is no other choice, no other alternative. The Church that venerates so many of your sisters, has always defended you, protected you, and loved you. As always, and even more so today, you are needed. Christ calls to Himself the Marys that He knew here below: the contemplatives and the sinners, the sisters of Lazarus, and the weeping women on the way to Calvary; all those who loved Him and all those who are destined to love Him. Your power, which is so great in evil, should be even greater in good. With your strength, help the recovery of mankind, since you aided its downfall with your weakness. It is not the first time that the salvation of peoples has been recommended to a woman. Deborah saved Israel, Judith saved Betulia, Veturia saved Rome, Saint Joan liberated France. These women were the saviors of cities and kingdoms rather than of souls, but you have before your eyes an even more divine example: She who in humility and in silence was the co-redeemer of the people.

You too have a soul, in part different from that of your companions, but in some respects even superior to theirs. Men have often abased, distracted, and besmirched your souls for their use and pleasure, but you have a weapon of revenge worthy of your loving kindness: uplift those very ones who tried to drag you down. You could, with the magic of holy tenderness, restore peace to the tormented souls and the divided cities. No longer let your smile be the reward for him who defeats his enemies, but for him who conquers hate within himself. Once again teach your sons the sweetness of brotherly love; take advantage of the love of your husbands to lead them back to brotherly love. May your pity be the healing comfort of every sorrow; may your beauty once again be

## TO THE WOMEN

the inspiration for less transitory beauties. Use your enchantments to change the swine of Circe into the elect of Beatrice.

To the extreme limits of your strength, be redeemers of the people, be collaborators of God, our allies in the imminent war of love against terror. Only if you succeed in being faithful servants of Christ, will you become majestic and free. Then at last you will be what the poets dreamed: angelic madonnas who will shine resplendently upon the forest of wild beasts, forever incarnate.

Pope Celestine VI

Servant of the servants of God

## CHAPTER X

### TO THE POETS

*My sons,*

GOD INSPIRES me to speak also to you and I obey. But are there still poets in the world? I do not perceive them, nor do I hear raised anywhere the voice that I await and that perhaps millions of souls like me await in vain. At every solemn moment of human history, after lives have been harvested and nations ploughed under, the poets lifted their voices to sing funeral chants or songs of victory, victorious hymns or psalms of supplication. Today not even the soldiers have their own song, nor are even the victims accompanied to their graves by the verses of a threnody. Over the immense blood-stained marsh is heard a tremendous clamor, but there rises no full song that with its melodious language sublimates our horror and our hope.

Have men perhaps become so torpid and so insensate that they no longer demand anything from the poets? For if a poet existed, a poet in the first and sacred meaning of the term, he would be heard defying even the granite inflexibility of our despair. The true function of Orpheus is the humanizing of the beasts.

Men no longer invoke the love of poetry. And yet never before has there been such a need for men to be transfigured, to be rescued, to be comforted by poetry. Only through the spiritual world can we hope for recovery and returning

strength in the material world. The voice of the poets was always the voice of the people. If the poets are silent, we know then that the people are already in the coma of agony, and that they have no longer even the strength to groan.

Why then do you hide in silence precisely at the time when there is need of a cry so powerful that even the dead would leap from their graves? True, I do see among you men who call themselves poets: flowery spinners of weak verses who draw on words as if in a lottery with the hope, which is almost always frustrated, of winning the prize of poetry. Egregious word-adorners who know all the vocabularies, all literature, and all the esthetics, but who no longer know or who have never known what the human and divine function of poetry really is. They are the astrologers of the narcissian lyric: they draw horoscopes from the entire zodiac of truth, but what they contrive on the patient paper is only the shavings or sawdust of the tree of poetry.

Does it then remain for an aged Pontiff to reinstruct you in your art and in your mission? Do not say—let the Pope take care of his priests and leave us alone to attend to our poems. Do not say it—it would be an injustice to you before me. As Vicar of Christ, the care of all souls is entrusted to me—yours, as well as those whom you should arouse and console. The religion of Christ does not ignore poetry nor does it deprecate it. The most enduring books of the Old Testament are poetic books; the Gospel is an entire poem that opens with the simplicity of a pastorate, culminates in the noblest tragedy, and concludes with the splendor of an apotheosis. The Church founded by Christ had canticles long before it had theological systems, and its cathedrals were not constructed only of stone. Every great poet was a Christian poet, even though born be-

fore Christ or far from Him: Homer is a Christian when Priam weeps at the feet of the weeping Achilles; Æschylus is a Christian when he pities the Titan chained on the Caucasus; Sophocles is a Christian in the filial and sisterly compassion of Antigone; Virgil is a Christian prophet when he announces the birth of the miraculous child and the remaking of the world.

St. Gregory, St. Ambrose, St. Ephraim, St. Francis, even St. Thomas sang in verses of the First and Supreme Poet.

Hence the Vicar of Christ has the right to speak also of poetry. It grieves me that the times are past when Leo X impatiently awaited the *Cristiade* of Vida, and Paul III anxiously looked forward to the completion of Michelangelo's poem in the Sistine Chapel. But I say to you that if the Chair of Peter is to remain as it was and must be, the throne of the spirit triumphant, it cannot renounce its alliance with the poets.

Since I am the Vicar of Christ, I can recall to you the dignity and necessity of poetry only in Christian terms. I fear that you who are well known among the plebians for your sin of arrogance do not know what God gave you and what He demands of you. If all men, in source and origin, are made in the image and likeness of Him, it is truly in you, after the Saints, that one can best discern His image and His likeness, not only of God the Creator but also of God the Redeemer.

Your work resembles the creation of the world because it gives harmonious form to the amorphous chaos of the senses, the emotions, the thoughts, it separates light from darkness; in other words, it imposes the radiant order of spirit on insensate matter.

## TO THE POETS

Your work resembles the ineffable mystery of the Incarnation, since you too must enclose the atoms and sparks of the divine spirit in the exterior and physical forms of the earthly idioms. Inspiration too, in order to redeem, must endure the imprisonment of syllables, which manifests it but at the same time reduces and diminishes it.

Your natural language is that of the image. With the perennial discovery of likenesses among beings and their aspects, you irrevocably point out the original oneness of the universe, more apparent to you than to others; you affirm the brotherhood of all the creatures destined to become reconciled in the newest return to God.

Your songs, with the magic of their healing and sublime beauty, purge every anguish and guilt, a purge that is the human echo of that Redemption that the Son of Man announced in His Beatitudes. Even if you do not know it, you are among the disciples of the Sermon on the Mount; you are, within the limitations of terrestrial expression, imitators of the Redemption, preparers of the Kingdom of Heaven.

In you is repeated, though in another manner and with a different meaning, the miracle of the Pentecost. You too have your gift, your charism, which is the understanding of the secrets of the soul, the knowledge of languages and of their enchantment. In the most fortunate moments of inspiration, when humility is a bridge to sublimity, you are showered with grace, you hear what God Himself says to you; and you, martyrs in ecstasy, seek to express it with all the power of your articulate sounds. Despite the poverty of means, the disparity of human conditions with respect to divine revelation, you succeed in imprisoning in your songs, often

unknown to yourselves, some fragment and echo of the Absolute Truth.

Hence poetry is an illuminator, a purifier, and a redeemer. You are, in your fashion, thaumaturgists, in that you collaborate in the miracle of changing the material to the spiritual, sorrow to joy, the pain of nature and of its King to a song of resurrection. Poetry thus understood—and all other ways of comprehending it are unworthy of it—is one of the airier and vaster entrance halls of Christianity. Whether you like or no, you are apostles of Christ "*in partibus infidelium*," mediators between the nostalgia of man and the promise of God. Your verses need not speak of the glory of Christ, of His Saints, and of His Church: there is a Christian tone, color, and significance in the very way you describe a cloud, a flower, a mountain, a child's face, the appearance of a woman. That cloud, through the hidden secret power of art, recalls to us the cloud of the Ascension; that flower resembles the lily of the parable; that mountain has some reflection of the splendor of Tabor; that child will be the brother of those who touched the knees of Jesus; that woman, if pure, will resemble the Virgin; if a sinner, the Samaritan woman. Poetry is the dissipator of shadows: whether it be the sorrow in the *Inferno* of Dante, or whether it be a love of life in the bitterest verses of Job. All the poets of the world, whether they know it or not, or are reluctant to be so, are but illuminators of the Gospel. Great poetry, in the likeness of Christ, is the way, the truth, and the life.

The poets of antiquity sang, above all, songs of victory: victory over the enemy, victory over a woman. The poets born after the Incarnation are instead like unto Jacob: they



struggle in the darkness of night with the angel, never victorious, never conquered. But when the dawn reddens the East, on the face of the poet is seen some refraction of the dazzling light of the angel.

You understand now why I make an appeal also to poetry for the restoration of joy to the world, the world maimed and imprisoned in the shadows of punishment. You can remind the thirsty of the waters of life which they have forgotten: of the infinite wealth of the poor, the beauty of sacrifice, the comfort of torments, the brotherhood of those in sorrow, the necessity of universal love, the power of forgiveness. You must describe in a new light the saving vision of the city of God, of that Kingdom of Heaven of the future which could be near if only men perceived that it is within themselves, as our Master proclaimed. You could have a great part in this restitution of the divine in the human, in this valid translation of the Gospel without which there is no conceivable deliverance from this horrendous pit of crazed reptiles to which this earth has been reduced.

Cease then being shrewd calligraphers of your frozen visions, abstemious distillers of liquors that do not intoxicate, devotees of intellectual brilliance, specious weavers of ennui. Be once again that which God intended and wishes you to be: the liberators of men from the daily garden of stones and thorns, the confidants of inarticulate hearts, the interpreters of manifest mysteries, the prophets who sustain man in the ascent to his true fatherland. The silence has lasted too long. Your absence is one of the gravest symptoms of the twilight of supreme values. As Vicar of the Most Divine Poet, it is my duty to remind you, too, of your duty, which is to be the voice

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of the silent. I call upon you today because God calls you in the name of His mercy, because man calls to you in the very silence of his desperation.

Pope Celestine VI

Servant of the servants of God

*PART II*

*THE LETTERS OF POPE CELESTINE VI*



## CHAPTER XI

### TO THE HISTORIANS

*My brothers,*

*my sons,*

IN THIS BITTER TWILIGHT of the world I must call upon you, too, to render an account as demanded by God. You had a share in the infection of men's minds and you are responsible for a share in the cure. You cannot save yourselves by saying: we keep the registers and records of the life of mankind and if men go astray, we can only make a catalogue of their errors and indicate the causes and effects of them with objective probity. That defense is so base that it confirms your guilt. History, as you conceive it and write it, justifies all that happens for the sole reason that it happens. It justifies the conqueror and the conquered, the murderer and the murdered, the butcher and the martyr. In truth it justifies nothing and no one, because in the world there is a law which you deny or forget: your neutrality puts you on the side of Ariman.

You call your method "historicism," but its true name is "Pilatism." In the presence of the condemned you only wash your hands, sprinkling each other, gravely content, with the greasy and bloody water in your basins. Despite so much washing, your hands are never white because you too are men,

and you cannot dissolve the red stains of human responsibility.

This is your first sin, but not the most serious. You pretend to understand with dispassionate clarity the journey of mankind, but in reality you do not understand it nor can you make others understand it, for you have severed and denied the relations between man and God. You have eliminated God from history and hence you are unable to understand even the history of man, which is only an episode, a chapter, a reflection of the history of God. Human history is the history of God in man, in so far as God is realized on the earth through man, made by Him in His image, restored by Him to that likeness by means of Redemption. The only profoundly intelligible history is that which has a beginning and an end. Human history for those who can discern the divine in us, is only the itinerary of man, from his separation from God to his return to Him. For that reason, there is no true history worthy of the name, except the writings of men inspired by God, that which begins with Genesis and ends with the Apocalypse.

Open your eyes and mouths as wide as you like, but this is the truth. You cannot understand man until you look at him in his relations with God. The earth is part of the heavens and you cannot discourse about it without speaking of the heavens. Man is not an orphan, and you cannot examine the affairs of his family without taking into account his Father, who is God.

"Every history is sacred history"—it is not I who says this, but the Protestant Hamann. "Every history is a Gospel"—it is not I who says it, but the idealist Novalis. If you do not make these axioms yours, you must perforce accept the scoffing defi-

nition of Shakespeare: "Life is a tale told by an idiot, signifying nothing." And what else, indeed, would the history of mankind be if not a restless torpor often interrupted by sudden outbursts of rage, when not revealed and illuminated by a divine law?

The history of the inhabitants of the earth is only the percussion and translation of a transcendental and supernatural history. It is only the dolorous reverberation of the life of quite different protagonists: of Christ who will be in agony until the end of the world, of Lucifer who will unleash his onslaughts until that day on which our love will extinguish even his hate. Frequently you procrastinate narrating the fluctuations of the battle and you never realize that the adversaries, though apparently in opposition, are occultly allied, allied in Evil in the war of the blind against the light of God.

History is a theandric tragedy, and you are only the wandering program-sellers; history is a drama of ever-redeemed sorrow, and you are as dusty and cold as the lids of funeral urns; history is a magnificent epic, and you are not poets but at best romancers.

In order to understand it fully, you should be "prophets of the past," and instead you are guides to cemeteries. Unfortunately, you are collectors of tombstones, archivists of epitaphs, scripturists of ceremonies, computers of chronology, journalists of appearances, mosaic-layers of biographies. You should be renders of veils, solvers of enigmas, but you are content to be gatherers of dry sticks, porers over recondite documents, surveyors of dusty fields, embalmers of royal hymns. When you delude yourselves by making solemn history from the origins and concatenations of events, you only demonstrate the more your lack of imagination, your nearsighted-

ness of vision, the dullness of your intuition, the bankruptcy of your ambition. The materials you offer to the historians of the future are but chiseled fragments of history, the shadowed blind-alleys of history. You cannot compose a history, because you lack that light which comes from above. You have the facts before your eyes, but from them you do not know how to deduce the mysterious connections, the deeper significances, the universal laws that govern them. You have not yet understood that the history of a nation, separated from that of all other nations, has no real meaning; that the history of an epoch, detached from that of all other epochs, has neither meaning nor use. Real history is universal, or it is nothing but a mass of mutilated chronicles and abortive architecture.

At least the historians of antiquity recognized a Fate that stood above the affairs of men; in history they perceived a world created by heroes; in it they honored a teacher of life. But now you only see no other basis of human life, even of the more spiritual, than the stomach's hunger, the needs of the senses, passionate impulses, the conflicts of self-interest and arrogance. You see man as a miserable, corrupt animal with the fear of death and the instinct to kill. Thus does man appear if disjoined from God, but judged in his relation with the tragedy which is created by heaven and earth, he is not merely a starving brute, murderer, and visionary, but quite different, as the Man-God demonstrated and taught. Now you deny the pre-eminence and resolute virtue of history's heroes; you see nothing but populations and masses of people, castes and classes, multitudes that make speaking puppets from everyday rags. You do not see that history is a circumnavigation and needs farsighted pilots, that history is a tragedy and requires protagonists more than a dramatic chorus,



that history is a poem and can only be developed around the banners or standards of heroes.

You smile—and can only smile—at the ancient faith in history as teacher of life. And in truth, she is rather the teacher of death than of life, for she teaches us that in order to release ourselves from what we call life here below and attain eternal life in Being, we must die. But of the famous definition of Marcus Tullius, you have taken only those two words: there are others from it that are more worthy to be made ours.

“History,” writes Cicero, “. . . the test of time, the light of truth, the life of memory, the teacher of life, the herald of ages.” You scorn the words, “teacher of life,” but why not pause at the words, “light of truth”? The old orator may have intended these words merely in their human interpretation—and we are not sure even of that—but we do know that man does not possess the full light of truth. He can be enlightened by it, but only when it descends from above, that is, from Revelation. I say now to you historians that history too can be revelation, the light of truth. As there are three persons in the one God, so are there on earth three revelations. The first is the revelation of the universe—the work of the Creator; the second is the Scriptures dictated by the Holy Ghost; the third is history, that is, the prefiguration and extension of the Man-God in human suffering.

Of the first revelation, the scientists have deciphered a small measure; the second has been our daily food for centuries; of the third, scarcely the first syllables have been vaguely glimpsed, like a letter read uncertainly beneath the dubious light of the stars. Unless you resolve to consider history as revelation, you will never succeed in discovering the true journey and true destiny of human kind. We investigate

the loftiest stars from mountain tops, we must investigate the lot of mankind from the heights of heaven. Seen from the pinnacle of faith, that which seemed unintelligible acquires meaning, that which seemed without law becomes lawful, that which once appeared as wandering lights arrange themselves into articulate constellations, that which was once obscure becomes the key to the inexplicable. Detached from God, history is only a tangle of revolt and delirium; drenched with the light of God, it becomes a song of a weary, but victorious hope. Unless history has a beginning and an end it has no meaning, it is a chronicle of repetitious insanities and useless crimes. This beginning and this end cannot be found in the primate of zoology that does not know its origin and is unaware of its lot, but can only be recognized in God. The omission of God in history has meant the nonunderstanding of man. God is that first and supreme mystery without which everything else is a frightening mystery. If everything is moved by Him, if everything belongs and refers itself to Him, how could He be omitted from the realm of history, that is, from the affairs of those creatures which He prefers above all others?

You historians, with your denial and your silence of God, are accomplices in the universal apostasy. By ignoring or being silent about the presence of God in history, you not only present a distorted and mutilated idea of man, but you encourage ignorance of Him and indifference to Him. We must know in order to love, and love is illumination which resolves itself in the bliss of adoration. The ostracism given to God becomes an ablation of knowledge and of happiness. And you know how great is the need of mankind to be disciplined and

consoled: an ever-present need, but especially in these times of destruction and rape.

You, too, are punished. You could live on a sunny mountain top from which height you would discover the design of the divine plan superimposed upon the apparent disorder of the haphazard events of human existence. Instead, you ruin your eyes in fetid cellars, where you mistake a lantern for the sun, the saltpeter on the walls for silver, a broken glass for a diamond mine, and a pile of rubbish for Mt. Everest. Go out in the sun of faith and there you will see arranged, in scenes of symmetry and clarity, that sacred representation of crime and punishment, of sin and redemption, of fall and ascent that is the sorrowful and marvelous history of mankind.

Do not say that this is theological history, a conception both antiquated and surpassed. Do you believe that just because a truth is ancient it ceases to be truth? Do you imagine perhaps that Theology, the science of God, is more fantastic than your physics and your anthropology? Do you perhaps delude yourselves with the idea that gravitation and the ether are less mysterious than the Trinity and the Incarnation? Do you know the nature of visible light better than we know the nature of the Holy Ghost? Ask it of your masters, those who truly know, that is, they know they move in a realm of words and symbols more insubstantial than that of our Theology. Do not boast of the marvelous applications of your sciences. The science of God, too, has its experimental and marvelous applications that are called ecstasy, love, miracles.

The method which you contemptuously term theological approaches truth much more than that which seeks the reason for historical as well as spiritual facts in the statistics of

cotton and the salary curves. If the attempts at historical revelation ascribed to St. Augustine and Bossuet do not suit you, make other attempts yourselves, being at the same time audacious as well as wary, now that historical material is so much more abundant and the analysis so much more vigilant and precise. I do not exhort you so much to imitate the specious fantasies of the old historical philosophers, but I do wish to urge you to the search of new and certain laws, which are solidly founded on absolute facts ascertained by your very selves. I tell you that the Columbus and Magellan of history are not yet born. But they can not be born as long as you historians stay in the grimy holds of fishing vessels anchored in the oily bays of rationalism instead of weighing anchor under great white sails that scud across the open sea before the strong, favorable winds of faith and poetry.

It is a great misfortune that even the historians of the Christian religion and the Church—perhaps through fear of ridicule or perhaps simply because of native mediocrity of mind—have deserted that divine ship of history considered as revelation. Aside from some “wolf of the heavens” that the rabble, the consumer of ordinary culture, eyes with supercilious suspicion and labels with the once sacred, and now infamous name, of “visionaries,” no one undertakes the navigation of long voyages on the deep sea of man’s past. They could have angels for pilots, and they are content to imitate moles. They write of the life of the Christian faith as if they were writing a declaration for a corporate company, with the same tepidity and placidity, with the same succession of necessary and expected paragraphs, always the same and in the same order, with that monotonous and tedious rhythm that bores the readers instead of exalting them in the warm limpid-

ity of the sky. Many pages of your books seem as though they were written in a murky twilight, with watered ink, and even dried with the dust of churchyards.

You, historians of Christ and of the Church, who should give to all the example of the divine interpretation of human life, instead display yourselves as being shy, almost fearful, of the supernatural. You are firmly entrenched in your fleshless outlines, in your chilly pigeonholes, in your pastures enclosed by the thorny hedges of bibliographies; you are contented, and neither demand nor perceive anything beyond them.

Your subject should be the most beautiful of all histories. It is the descent of a God in human form into human life, the expectation and preparation of His coming, His posthumous life in the human hearts of man, the light encircled by the shadows, the fire menaced by the ashes, the defeats and reconquests of Lucifer, the interferences and intercessions of nature and of grace, of the vocations and predestinations, of the depths and the heights, and even the discernible signposts for the ultimate itinerary. The history of Christianity is the most dramatic of all histories. It is not a slow, placid development, followed by splendor or decadence, but a constantly renewed defense against all the forces that oppose the triumph of Christ. It is a heroic history of offensives overpowered, assaults repelled, treacheries frustrated, plots overcome, of contagions purged. So it was, for centuries and centuries, from the stoning of Stephen until the present time. The history of the Christian religion, that is, of its perennial resistance and survival, is its most evident apologia, the major proof of its divine origin. But you do not know how to see it nor make it seen. You are smoldering haystacks and not fiery-

red candelabras: you are among the greatest sinners against the Holy Ghost.

Your mediocrity is criminal because you minimize the very Church of Christ and repel those who would be more worthy to hear of its grandeur. If you were inspired by faith, love, and poetry, you could make surprising and magnificent discoveries which would demonstrate even to the most obtuse and nearsighted the function of God in human affairs: "*L'homme s'agite et Dieu le mene.*"<sup>1</sup>

Many have affirmed and many repeated that the Cross is at the center of history. But no one has taken the trouble to present the irrefutable proof, "*more geometrico demonstrata*,"<sup>2</sup> of this truth, the illuminator of every future apologetic. Such a demonstration is indubitably possible, and only your stubbornness before all the signs of a superhuman Presence delays it. At an equal number of years before and after the Incarnation are seen events, beginnings, and disappearances so similar as to be almost identical. The Cross is like an immobile sun around which moves, according to the law of the time, the wheel of history: the number of correspondences, of analogies, and repetitions, at a fixed date—before Christ and after Christ—is so great that it can not be coincidental. One sees at once what could be the value of this discovery for those who are only convinced by innumerable concrete facts, to show them the divinity of Christ, which is the cornerstone of our faith.

As I have said many times and I will never tire of saying, if

<sup>1</sup> The opening sentence of a sermon delivered on the Feast of the Epiphany by the famous French writer and Cardinal, Fenelon. Similar in thought to Thomas à Kempis', "Man proposes, God disposes."

<sup>2</sup> "Shown through geometrical proof."

## TO THE HISTORIANS

the human race is on the eve of a mortal danger, and if this dissolution can be avoided only by your inclusion of the Christian religion in your work, then you understand why I turn also to you. All that draws away from or detaches itself now from Christianity hastens death; everything which opens to men the blissful and conquering strength of Christ is, for every man and every nation, a promise and a guarantee of salvation. Even you then, must lend a hand—in your domain—to this immeasurable but not deferrable work of universal conversion. Many of you have dismissed God as a hostile and troublesome intruder; others, not less guilty, have spoken of His designs and His works among men without the vigor of intuition or of love, almost as if they wished to be forgiven by the nonbelievers for their belief of God. But men, if they do not wish to die, must rediscover and worship God in every part and form of the universe. Hence they must feel God, even in the history of themselves; and if this history is almost always history of suffering they must know that the groan of mankind is also the will to attain and put into action the divine in us, which is the all-penetrating certainty of a total rebirth.

It is your turn, historians, to be the first to prove this brilliant revelation of the imperative revival. In the name of Christ, be no longer ink-stained exhibitors of ghosts but guides to Eternity across the mire of time. Do your work so that it becomes the already affirmed sacred truth: history as the prefiguration of universal justice.

Pope Celestine VI  
Servant of the servants of God

## CHAPTER XII

### TO THE SCIENTISTS

*My sons,*

IF, AS YOU CRY OUT at every step, your goal is the search of truth, you will not scorn to listen to one who represents that supreme truth which, in your search, you have so often disregarded.

I know that many of you consider yourselves in a state of war with the Christian religion and every other form of religion. I assure you that the Church of Christ is not at war with you. It has never prohibited the investigation of nature to its sons: sufficient to recall that the first experimenter of the Middle Ages was a Franciscan brother, that one of the most powerful apologists of the modern era was a mathematician and physicist of recognized distinction.

The Christian religion, moved solely in the interest of human happiness, combats your arrogance, denounces your illusions, is distressed by some of the frightful results of your discoveries, but it has no fear of you. On the contrary, we are certain that you will be the exegetes of that first divine revelation which is the world. Consoled by this hope, I turn to you with love and without fear.

A famous astronomer proclaimed that we had no need of an hypothesis of God in order to understand His cosmogony. But God, much more humble than he, does not do without De Laplace and his calculations. When the repudiator of the



Creator lay on his death bed and a friend reminded him of one of his celebrated discoveries, De Laplace replied: "What we know is a little less than nothing, what we do not know is immense." These sage words were assuredly inspired by God, whose home is in that immensity which was unknown to De Laplace.

Many others before and after him have believed in finding in science the confirmation of the denial of God. Nor do I fear these. Even they, without their knowledge and in spite of themselves, contribute to the already begun fabric of a new apologetic. Not only like the helots, the tipsy porters of Sparta, with their sometimes repellent exhibition of materialism, but as providers of construction stones for our counterfort. Often the negation of God is only one of the forms of hunger for God. Rabid and jealous hunger, but nevertheless, always hunger. And it is natural for the hungry to search for food, even though it be among filth. Some deny divinity only in appearance, for, recognizing its necessity, they seek to transfer it to man. These are Christians in reverse: no longer God who becomes man, but man who becomes God. The Christians too, for their part, desire the deification of man, but they know that man cannot reach it if there is not a God who creates him, transcends him, and guides him. Without God, man will always remain a miserable, frenetic animal: only united to God can he become divine.

Do you never ask yourselves why so many of you believe in God and why so many of you declare Him dead? The sciences are for all, their findings equally available to all: why then do the scientists arrive at such opposing attitudes of thought? Could it not be that these differences arise not from the aspect and laws of reality, but from the qualities of mind and spirit

of the scientists? A more acute perception and a more generous heart help to find God in nature; an arrogant spirit or a less brilliant mind neither knows how nor desires to discover Him. I firmly believe, not only by the light of hope but by the token of new proof, that science will be the more closely allied to the Christian religion to the degree that its investigations are just that much more profound and its theories loftier and vaster. Like history, science too will be much greater when it places itself at the service of God. Its crowning achievement will consist in the discovery of the universe as Revelation.

Science, which until now has been primarily an auxiliary in the realization of the needs and dreams of men, must become an illuminator of the signs and designs of God. You scientists have been servants of the elements and dominators of matter; you must become evangelists of the spirit and apostles of divinity. But to climb to this lofty arena of science you must reform: cast aside your presumptuous arrogance and attack with zealous ardor the building of an embankment against the flood of murderous consequences of your faults.

Your present and increasing power over men is founded upon your acceptance of Satan's command. Like the serpent, you too have said to men: You will be like gods. You have promised knowledge and power, and you have given some anticipation or simulacrum of both. But despite your arrogance, you have not been able to bestow either omniscience or omnipotence. You have been more skillful and more fortunate wizards than the ancients; you have been content to present yourselves to the masses as compilers of exact inventories and efficacious prescriptions, as architects of formulas

and hypotheses, as prisoners of natural forces: something midway between a licensed guide to the universe and a vice-divinity of our planet.

But is the knowledge which you proffer with such proud humility the true knowledge of reality? That power which you have granted to men, is it indeed so great and so beneficial as men naively believe? As well as the pretentious rivals of magicians, there is no lack among you, fortunately, of scientists of great value and great reputation, humbler and hence more profound than the others, who have justified the possession of scientific pride.

I do not fail to recognize the daring beauty of your conceptual edifices that elevate and purify the mind, even if they do not please it and so much the less satisfy it. But you, too, must confess that your most renowned and felicitous theories are only imagined hypotheses for imposing a conditional order upon the enormous, ever-changing tangle of perceptible facts. These hypotheses have their origin and form in nonaltruistic stimuli much more than in the exigencies of pure knowledge. They are expedients arising from the convenience of memory and practice, suggested by the principle of minimum effort, that is, by mental economy. All scientific progress is the gradual devising of broader, clearer hypotheses, better adapted to provide useful previsions. Hence these changing theories, the product of scientific fantasies, are, in reality, practicable recipes designed to abridge the complete lists of appearances and, above all, to put into men's hands some of the forces of nature. Science has its origins in necessity and the practice of magic, and even today such origins are recognized. Since man, in order to escape death, prizes domina-

tion over matter, from the beginning he neglected spiritual reality in order to dedicate himself completely to the investigation of the physical world.

You triumph in designating, counting, measuring, describing, calculating, and forecasting: but you are still groping when you should be explaining, revealing, and disclosing the real essence of being. When you want to offer an integral explanation of all things, you depart from concrete reality by another route. The supreme ideal of the physicists is to reduce all phenomena to motions in space, but in so doing they only create another reality, an abstract world constructed by the human mind wherein man feels himself more easily the master. The last word of this science is the final identity of all appearance, reduced to measurable motion—and for that reason reduced to the destruction of the living concreteness of the universe, to the denial of the real world, which is arbitrarily replaced by a new world, perfect in itself but imaginary. You do not give, nor can you give, the true knowledge of reality but only convenient hypotheses as long as there prevails in you the utilitarian ideal; nor can you give anything but rational phantasmagorias if you are driven only by mathematical passion.

You will say that, thanks to such conjectures and imaginings, you have succeeded in giving man, if not knowledge, at least power. No one contests such boasts. But I who observe you and judge you from the loftiest summit of the spirit cannot become overenthusiastic with these notorious conquests, as do the cultured masses. The power granted by you is much less than the prating of your devotees and, what is infinitely more serious, the consequent advantages of this power in

daily life are paid for with a tremendous price of ruin and death.

Under your direction, men have enlarged their control over the earth and the elements. They have tunneled through a few mountains, have created an artificial lake or two, have reclaimed some bit of land from the sea, have deforested and tilled great areas of arid land, have cut three or four isthmuses, have altered the courses of a few rivers, have rendered a few swamps arable. And because of that they proudly boast of "having changed the face of the globe."

You know as well as I do that the most remains to be done. Men have not yet succeeded in leveling a mountain, in extinguishing a volcano or even exploiting its power, in creating new islands, in irrigating and reclaiming the deserts, in covering over with fertile humus the steppes, flat lands, and dunes, in taming the predatory and harmful animals, in calming the tempests of the sea, in mastering the waves of the ocean, in halting or repelling the whirlwinds of the sky, in procuring reserves of solar heat to mitigate the cold of winter, in impeding or controlling telluric motion.

Man, despite his vainglory, does not yet know fully his own habitation. Men climb mountains every day, and yet have not succeeded in setting foot on the highest peaks; there are polar shores, forests, and jungles that their eyes have not yet seen. They dig tunnels and wells, but these cavities scarcely nick the first layer of the earth's crust. They descend into the sea, but only a few cubits distance in comparison with the abysmal depths of the oceans. They have succeeded in rising into the air, but their flight resembles the leap of a grasshopper with respect to the distance that separates the

earth from the nearest star. They boast of erecting titanic edifices, but the most famous towers, cupolas, and massive structures are in actual elevation of only a modest grandeur. They can travel at a velocity which to them seems vertiginous, but always round and about the tiny sphere on which they dwell, which seems ever more miserable to them but which nevertheless they cannot abandon.

Your glory in preserving life and retarding death is not always a vain one, but you have not succeeded in creating new life in your laboratories, nor have you succeeded in conquering death. Instead, because of you, death is multiplied by the millions. Your inventions are immediately applied, with your complicity, for destruction and assassination. The gunpowder invented by a monk should have been used to blast rock and excavate mountains, but those in power use it for the slaughter of their enemies and their subjects. Cars intended to transport men more rapidly on the highways of the earth are transformed into murderous vehicles that spew forth iron. The flying machines were immediately adapted to rain fire upon defenseless cities and unarmed populations. Electricity, which should give light and heat to all, is used to hurl killing rays for great distances. The physicists, investigating ever more deeply into the nature of the atom, have split it, but instead of putting it to work to help the miserable people, rapidly devise means so that a populated city can be reduced in a few moments to a horrible pile of ruined walls, corpses, and the dying.

You give to man a certain power, even though limited, over matter, but you forget that man is man's enemy and hence uses these powers for death rather than for life. You know the ferocious nature of man; you should know that one cannot

put explosives and poisons into the hands of children and the insane. It would have been far better to give him more valid dominion over the higher qualities of the spirit before providing bestial man with weapons so much more frightful than teeth and claws. In the common opinion, you seem like giants, but if this is true, you belong to the Cyclops family: you have but one eye in your forehead—that which measures and controls matter. You lack the other eye, that more marvelous and powerful eye, which penetrates and dominates the spirit.

Your accounts do not balance. You charge, for your services, the highest price of slavery, desolation, and blood. With your medical science you save millions of lives, and with your physics you bring death to millions of creatures. You invent machines that ought to alleviate man's toil, but they sharpen man's cupidity, making it gigantic; little by little the machines become man's implacable tyrant, they corrupt him, drive him mad, and eventually destroy him. You are the benefactors of humanity, but at the same time, its destroyers. With one hand you give ounces of balm; and with the other torches for conflagrations. You promise more than you give, and what you do give is more calamitous than beneficial to all. You have made yourselves out as priests of a new god who would exile every other divinity in the museum of despised antiquity, but your god has the shape of Moloch much more than the characteristics of the savior Apollo. You have no other choice: work for the good of mankind or do not work.

Because of the threat of darkness and torture that now menaces mankind, your responsibility is enormous and must be expiated. I do not desire your condemnation, but your conversion. I want you to abandon your occupation as verbal

prestidigitators and manufacturers of evil-making toys to become, as some of you have tried, illuminators and uplifters of your brothers. You are the sons of Lucifer, and I exhort you to be always bringers of light, but by pouring out upon the world a light of a very different quality. Your mission could be sublime, almost redemptory, by being expounders of the divine revelation that is written in clear characters in the universe.

In the last centuries you have sought to abase and vilify man. You have ridiculed his certainty of being at the center of the universe, while, if it is true that infinity is that sphere which has its center anywhere and its circumference in no place, then any part of infinity, even the humble earth, can be the center of creation. You have scoffed at man's likeness to God and made of him the degenerate or accidental descendant of the quadrupeds, and yet you cannot in any way explain man's highest nostalgia without that likeness. You have wanted to reduce all spiritual life to forms of carnal concupiscence, or directly to unconscious reflexes and to regulated instinctual motions. From being modeled by the hands of God, intermediate between nature and the spirit, worthy of being redeemed and called upon to redeem, you have made him into a poor voracious animal, salacious and predatory, painfully evolved from the condition of a savage beast, with no other destiny but to suffer before returning as slime to the slime of the earth.

You should, instead, point out to all men the ways of sublimation. You should reveal to the stupefied eyes of the forgetful legatee his wonderful dignity as an associate in the Kingdom of God. The universe is the palimpsest and the hieroglyph of a Sacred Scripture, of a second Bible that needs



you to interpret and translate it. You should decipher and set in orderly discourse the words that God has written on every page of the universe. If God created the world, His work necessarily bears traces of the spirit and will of the artificer. If man is made in the image and likeness of the Creator, then the world too is made in the image and likeness of the Creator. It is for you to discover those traces, to demonstrate that likeness.

Your most modern theories on the infinitely small and the infinitely large that reduce the inert matter of the early materialists to rapid motions of waves and of light, which are ever more like to the spirit, could become the prolegomena of the great work that I await from your genius. This work must demonstrate that the universe is the wax upon which is imprinted the no longer mysterious seal of divinity, the immense mirror that reflects its perceivable image.

As God is one, so is everything in the universe one; and you, who discovered in the atom the same plan as in the solar system, know this. A harmony of this nature can only have its source and model from a unique Mind.

But God is also a Trinity, and you too are forced to recognize a fundamental trinity from which everything emerges: light, which can be compared to the Father; the indivisible space-time, which can be compared to the Son; motion, which corresponds to the Holy Ghost.

God is love, hence prodigality and sacrifice. And you should point out how the infinite prodigality that we see in the universe, the superabundant profusion of atoms, of stars, of splendors, of fires, of living species, of seeds, is a corroboration of the divine origin of all life. You should also indicate, better than you have done, that all life that stirs

in the universe, from the humblest larva to the most remote nebula, is sacrifice: sacrifice of the part for the whole, of the inferior to the superior. Seen in this light, the entire creation is the annunciation of a more lofty sacrifice, the antithesis and at the same time the model of that Redemption in which the whole is immolated for the part, the superior sacrificed to the inferior.

There is another law recognizable in the design and development of the universe: that of the ascension. It is the perennial ascension from the inert to the living, from the living to the spiritual, from the spiritual to the divine. From the tree that causes the dormant molecules which lay in the darkness of the earth to rise to the sky and sun and transforms them into living leaves and resplendent flowers, to man, who not content with erecting columns and towers, elevates his spirit in the contemplation of thought to the fruition of ecstasy, to the imitation of the perfect and eternal—all, in the immensity of reality, desire the ascent, eagerly aspire to the climb, reach out laboriously but invincibly toward that firmament, material or spiritual, where only can they be at peace, because in that height they had their origin and find again their native land. The successive motion of all creatures, from the wandering amoeba on dead waters to the saint in prayer, is nothing but a return: the return to the native seat, the primary source. All of us, from the amoeba to the genius, are only returning pilgrims and travelers who gropingly seek, in the dark and in the light with pertinacious anxiety, the steps of the stairway. All descended from above, and all aspire and ardently yearn to return on high. It is the return of the material to the spiritual, of death to life, of sin to innocence, of the brute to humanity, of man to God.

## TO THE SCIENTISTS

This is the mysterious and joyful law of the universe, and this law, together with the others, you should thrust into the obscurity of men's minds with the inconfutable rays of truth. As the historians must be the prophets of the past, so you should become prophets of the eternal, the first commentators of the first Revelation.

I ask much of you because I love you greatly and because you can and should do much toward the resurrection of the divine in man, that is, for the common salvation before and after death. In my agitated words there are only partial signs of what Christianity awaits from you, but with your knowledge and will, you could transform them into cascades of light and flooding rivers of resplendent love.

I call you too, men of science, to the challenge of the ultimate gesture that will bring victory to the laws of life over and above the encounters of death. Save, if you wish to save yourselves. Do not wait for men to perceive your responsibility and cast you from the rostrums of fame and reputation down the well of oblivion. Even your powerful predecessors, the magicians of early civilization, met such a fate. The people pass easily from reverence to ingratitude. If your faults were great, the reward and benefit of your alliance with God will be still much greater.

Before you I am, in my purely human aspect, only a patient and impatient reader of your speculations. But I have with me, within me, and beside me, a Master who knows what you do not know, who knows all because He created all, who forgets nothing and deceives no one, a Lord who desires the magnification and transfiguration of all His sons, even you who many times scorn Him and often ignore Him. I speak to you in His name, forgive you in the name of His forgive-

ness, I love you in the name of His love. Hear me, before it is too late. Help me to halt the storm that is about to attack and scatter the human race.

I ask of you one thing only, but it is that which I can ask only of you: to transmute yourselves from imitators of Satan to revealers of God. St. Luke, who was a physician, became an apostle; Pascal, who was a physicist, became an apologist; Newton, who was a mathematician, became a commentator of the Apocalypse; Swedenborg, who was a naturalist, became a prophet of the inherent divinity in creation. You, too, follow these examples. Be disclosers of the mysteries deposited, but not buried, in the perceptible world; make visible, under the transitory garb of the cosmos, the loving works of the three-fold Eternal Author. I do not impose upon you an abdication, but I promise you an advancement that will be your joy and your glory. To immerse the spirit in the fulgent light of eternal truth is a more marvelous undertaking than to invent another machine for profit and for the torment of mankind. You, too, can obtain, if you wish, this happiness, to which nothing else is comparable. Let my supplication be not in vain; do not scorn my prayer. My torn heart swells in this hope that through your virtue my prayer will become true in certainty.

I have said that I love you despite your sins. But I will love you still more when I am able to call you, not only sons in the will of the Father, but brothers in the redemptive work of Christ.

Pope Celestine VI

Servant of the servants of God

## CHAPTER XIII

### TO THE CHRISTIANS OF THE SEPARATED CHURCHES

*My brothers,*

I DO NOT ADDRESS you with this name through perfunctory formality, but to call attention to our common filiation and our single paternity. If you do not recognize me as the Vicar of Christ, you certainly know that I endeavor to be a disciple of Christ, as I know that you, too, seek to be His disciples. We are brothers in His name and in His spirit, in spite of the doctrines and the distrust that have separated us. If theologies and traditions divide us, the Gospel and the Cross unite us. I do not wish to speak to you of dogmas and canons, but of unity and fraternity. You must listen to me. I entreat each one of you, whatever may be his church and his creed, to listen to me. Do not look upon me as the Pope of Rome, but today, only as a gray-haired, weeping Christian, a companion in Christ who would like to pray and hope with all of you.

Let us forget, at least in this baleful hour of warnings and threats, our differences and our mistakes. It is not time for accusations and sermons, much less for scolding and invectives. Let the dead argue with the dead. We are alive amid multitudes of evil-doers, and we all desire the Christian re-

ligion to be the new life for all men. I do not see you today as either heretics of schismatics, heterodoxes or dissenters, but only as the scattered sons of my own Father. In this Church in which Christ is the Priest and King, according to the order of Melchizedek, I feel you as close to my heart as those who are bound to my side.

The separation was a sin manifest to the eyes of God, but the sin was not all yours. The scission from Rome was occasioned at times—if not always justified—not only by your errors but also by ours. Not always did the splendor of the Holy Ghost succeed in overcoming the opacity of human clay, so that this was offered as a pretext for your disdain, your pride, and your rebellion.

Let us, then, leave to the bones of the controversialists the quivers crammed with rusty javelins. Let us together lament the opposing blunders, let us together raise again the common hopes, let us work together for the common good. Christians delude themselves that they have divided among themselves, like the soldiers of Golgotha, the seamless robes of the Crucified One. But the Divine Cadaver, nude, lies in our midst, wounded but intact, bloody but ever warm, released from the wood, but nailed forever on the cross of our life. That Cadaver has only the semblance of death, it is waiting to arise once again. He awaits from us all His Resurrection in the hearts and in the world.

My brothers, my brothers in love and in the desire of Christ, you see, you know, you understand to what crossroad the universal madness has dragged the human family. We have heard with our own ears the horrible crashing noise of the penultimate ultimatum. It is not directed at one nation more than at another, at one single faith, at one church, at

one community. It is a hideous and peremptory warning to all nations and all religions. It is the "either-or" of life and of death, the choice between the unburied treasures of the Gospel and the raging abyss of final annihilation. We are almost shipwrecked people who wave a tattered flag from the top of a wave-beaten reef; we are pilots who are losing control of the ship but still cling to the helm with weak and trembling fingers. The drama of the world has now reached its apex; it is for us to see that it does not end in the slaughter of catastrophe, but is redeemed in the illumination of the purge. A like dilemma has been inherent for centuries in the history of mankind, but today we are called for the last vigil. The chief creditor cannot grant other moratoriums. It is imperative that we revive, or we will end in death.

But there is no hope of resurrection outside the faith in the Risen One. We carefully guard the sepulcher, but the sepulcher is empty, and we raise our eyes in vain to the skies covered with the enormous, black clouds of the recent and present punishments. Christ is among us, ever alive in His flesh and in His blood, but as a troublesome intruder, a pilgrim to whom no one listens, whom all send away because our inns, as at Bethlehem, are crowded with high-ranking, invading guests who only have contempt for Him. Many repeat His words, but as a child repeats the sounds of his mother's speech, without understanding its meaning: they are words pronounced, cried out, written, but too seldom are they incarnated in actions or revealed in the second birth of the spirit. Indeed, if we wish that the Resurrection may rise again in us we must make ours, in every throb and pulse of the heart, the invocations of the sequence that, kneeling, we sing on the morning of Pentecost:

THE LETTERS OF POPE CELESTINE VI

*Lava quod est sordidum,  
riga quod est aridum,  
rege quod est devium,  
fove quod est languidum,  
flecte quod est rigidum,  
sana quod est saucium.*<sup>1</sup>

The day of wrath can be replaced only by the day of purification. But the only purification possible is in the furnace of love. And I turn to the fire of your hearts rather than to the light of your intellects.

You understand now why I also call you together, Christians separated from Peter, but not separated nor separable from the Master of Peter. The house burns and crumbles, within the ruins we hear the death rattle of the men entrusted to us, faith wavers, hope languishes, love fades; and should we continue to stare suspiciously at one another, waging guerrilla warfare with books and skirmishing with formulas, to cultivate distrust and repeat anathemas? The armies of the Cyclops of sin and the Titans of force have circumvallated Christianity on every side; and should we remain like motionless sentinels in the enclosures of scattered and menaced sheepfolds?

I am not only the most aged of men, but as Pope, I am also the most ancient of shepherds, and it is for me to set the example. I beg you through the heart of Christ: listen to my cry, listen to it so that my call to reveille may not be only an

<sup>1</sup> Heal our wounds; our strength renew;  
On our dryness pour Thy dew;  
Wash the stains of guilt away.  
Do Thou bend the rigid will;  
Guide the steps that go astray.



echo in the sand dunes of the desert. If it is yet much too soon for us to rejoice together in the jubilation of re-established unity, let us at least make a pact of alliance against the common enemy, against the monstrous grief that tortures all our sons. Let us make a Holy League, no longer for temporal contingencies but for eternal ends: let us make a Holy Alliance, no longer for the preservation of secular power but for a spiritual victory.

Even if the temporary abdication of each religious sect seems insulting to you, think of the martyrdom of those who suffer because they do not yet recognize Christ, of the crushing oppression of those who suffer because they do not know how to live in Christ, of the curse of those who make others suffer because they are removed from Christ. In the face of so much sore distress, all irresolution and arrogance must be dissolved like thin cobwebs of fog before the first arrow of the sun.

The union of all Christians is desired by God, and if God wills it we must, sooner or later, re-establish it. Among the griefs that more cruelly pierce my heart, one of the most heinous is the knowledge of the scattering of the forces of Christ. If a desperate impetus of affection, if a superabundance of consuming anguish would be sufficient to unite you, I believe that you would have been close to me a long time ago, to sob in the joy of peace regained. That day of wonderful jubilation is perhaps far off, perhaps close at hand: if I were worthy to be heard by God, it would be imminent. If each one of you was redeemed by one drop of Jesus' blood, I have implored and I do implore Him for the return of each of you by each tear of my mournful weeping.

You can read in your own histories what have been the

lamentable effects of the separation. You denied the supremacy of a spiritual head, and in more than one country you have been obliged to submit to the profane supremacy of the civil powers. My Church, lacerated and decimated, became more defenseless before the overwhelming, advancing temporal powers, and had to pay for a crafty patronage with bonds of servitude.

The secular perseverance of the schisms and the heresies has compelled the Church of Rome to enclose itself little by little in ever more rigid and impassable confines of theological formulas and disciplinary edicts, thus to render evasions and desertions more difficult, but with the resulting limitation of the liberty which the Christians of the first centuries enjoyed. For this limiting of freedom, which is one of your chief accusations, you are the primary causes.

In the Eastern Christian churches, we have seen a continuous germination of sects, heretical to the point of delirium and crime; in the West we have witnessed a perpetual breaking-off into congregations and sects that permitted to all conjectures and all aberrations the right to establish themselves as religious communities, at times very meager and always more removed from the fundamentals of the revealed truth. New so-called Christian religions have been announced by prophets of spurious conventicles that offered as a potion of salvation a confusing mixture of moldy deism and ludicrous pseudo-science.

The separation has generated a still more pernicious and shameful effect: it has made our work of conversion among non-Christians less decisive and less fruitful. Indeed, what must the desired proselytes think of a religion that, while recognizing the same God and the same book, is presented to

them by missionaries who have not the same head and are not under the same authority? And remember, brothers, that men cannot be saved until that day when all, even the very last one, shall be restored again by the water of John, the bread of Christ, and the fire of the Holy Ghost.

Monstrous and frightful, then, is our responsibility before the human race, and still more so before God, who will demand from us an accounting or our dismemberment. He has intrusted us with one single harvest and we have dispersed the band, already too scarce of reapers, into hostile groups.

Facing the present necessity and the approaching threats, let us at least make a Godlike truce that permits an alliance and prepares for unity. Let us put aside that which divides and separates; let us instead gather around the focal points of the possible and desirable concord. There are three of these points which none of you can deny: Christ is God; Christ has redeemed mankind; Christ's message is the doctrine of brotherhood against ferocity, of humility against pride, of love against hate. These are the chief pillars embraced by all of you and upon which we can establish the principles of a sincere accord and a common effort. In the presence of these pillars of a divinely ecumenical faith, the doctrinal dissensions that divide us are only the rocks and ditches on the long and bitter road to future unity. The hour of the theologians and the historians will come. This is the hour of the apostles and the brothers. Today, beyond and above every consideration, there is the duty and the need of charity. Charity toward the lost and the possessed, toward the victorious and the vanquished—pity among ourselves, among us who trust in the same Providence and suffer from the same need.

We Catholics are certain of belonging to the one legitimate Church, but we realize that it will not be truly universal if you are missing from it, that it will not be triumphant until you return to the Rock of Peter. You need us, but we need you also; your strength, your knowledge, your familiarity with the divine words, your fraternal industriousness.

Also among you—I know it and the world knows it—there are souls ardent and vigorous in fidelity to Christ, souls that burn fiercely in the sphere of the Gospel, souls that seek salvation only in the Savior, souls that aspire to and approach sanctity. To these flaming souls I make an assignment—that they burn away the wall that divides us, that they resolve the drama in an immense chorale of Christian and human victory. I hope that my lament and my hope may reach the priests and the militia of Christ who lament and hope in all the Christian churches of the earth. There were martyrs of the faith in all the churches; in the name of that blood I entreat you to acknowledge yourselves as brothers of the same blood, redeemed by the same blood, united in the will to put an end forever to the shedding of human blood.

It is not I, Pontifex Maximus of the Church of Rome, who speaks to you and supplicates you, but it is God Himself who makes use of my words to call you together, as a musician of genius makes use of the most miserable instrument to evoke the harmonies that melt the heart. I will be with you, in your midst, first among the captains of my great army and last among the veterans in the endless Hosts of God who will unite, under the insignia of the Son, the visible and the invisible Church. That this immense army may be reunited and triumph, I am prepared to make any sacrifice, I am ready to die.

TO THE CHRISTIANS OF THE SEPARATED CHURCHES

I implore the Trinity with all the power of my human weakness, with all the hope that gushes forth from the universal desperation, that you may be inspired to listen to me and heed my words. I will not cease knocking upon your doors as long as my hand can strike and my voice cry out.

To all those who will open their doors and who will respond, I send, from this moment, with the moan of an anxious spirit, my fraternally paternal benediction.

Pope Celestine VI

Servant of the servants of God

## CHAPTER XIV

### TO THE HEBREWS

*My brothers,*

*my sons,*

FOR A LONG TIME I have had a strong desire to turn to you. And now, at the end of my days, the hour to speak to you has arrived; to speak to you as no Pope has ever spoken to you.

Though you denied and rejected my God, I cannot hate you. Within me I feel the certainty that between the Church of Christ and the people chosen by Christ there is a mysterious bond that no sword can sever. God wished us to be bound together with those luminous thongs that are called Mary, Peter, Paul, and John. You cannot foreswear them, for they were of your own blood; we who love them cannot forget that they were Hebrews.

Ultimately one of our peoples must triumph. Either you will succeed in eradicating Christianity from the face of the earth; or you will one day become Christians of the last vigil, as you were of the first vigil. And since we believe that the Church founded upon the rock of Peter can never fall, we, its adopted sons, impatiently await you who are the primogenitures of the Promise. To escape your tyrants and persecutors, you are scattered all over the highways of the world, but you cannot escape forever from Christ, who is the most loving of

tyrants, the most tenacious of persecutors. If, through an unimaginable mystery of poverty, Christ had need of someone, I believe He would be hungry for you, for your souls, for your love.

In His human form, did He not descend from Abraham and from David? Was He not born, like you, under the law of Moses? Was not the mother who nursed Him at her breast a Jewess? Were not the Jews the first to listen to Him, follow Him, and believe in Him? At that time there lived on the earth hundreds of peoples, and Christ could have chosen any one of them as His own. But He loved the unhappy, the scorned, the persecuted, and the oppressed, hence He wished to be born among the Hebrews because your people were then the most unhappy and scorned, oppressed by foreigners, ridiculed and hated more than any other people.

His terrestrial life was, if you examine it well, the repetition of the life of your race. The Old Testament is crowded with "images" of Christ—but your entire history is an "image" of the history of Christ, a prophecy in actuality of His vicissitudes here below.

He was born among beasts and shepherds, just as your people had their origin with Abraham, the shepherd of flocks and men.

From the beginning He was adored by foreigners, the Magi; just as you had as your first father Abraham, the Chaldean, and as your first lawmaker Moses, the Egyptian.

He, too, had to seek refuge in Egypt, as Abraham and Jacob had already done.

He, too, was exiled as you were, in Babylonia: though you returned to the land of Canaan and He into Palestine.

He, too, lived for forty days in the desert, as your fathers

after the Exodus lived for forty years in the desert tempted by idols, as Christ was tempted by Satan.

The Law was entrusted to Moses in a briar patch bristling with thorns. Jesus, because He brought a new Law, was crowned with those same thorns.

Satan offered to Jesus all the kingdoms of the earth, and even in the most degrading hours of your servitude you have ever dreamed of seeing mankind united under the scepter of David.

Christ had no real home—not even a stone on which to lay His head—and, like Him, you have been without a secure fatherland for millenniums, you have wandered as exiles and nomads, forced to partake at the tables of strangers.

You have always envisioned the restoration of the monarchy of David—with the Maccabees, with the Herodians, with Bar Casheba; and He, the descendant of David, was crucified under an inscription that read King of the Jews.

His clothes were divided even as, from the time of Solomon, your kingdom was broken into pieces, and later divided into tetrarchies; His disciples scattered through all countries as your fathers had already scattered in the Diaspora.

Lastly, your people were, like Christ, a “sign of contradiction”; they too were pierced and knew, as He, how to rearise.

You cannot deny this mysterious though manifest analogy, which is testified to by your own books. If the Christian Church is the mystical body of Christ, your people were, before the coming, the prophetic body of Christ. The bonds are innumerable and still visible. Caiphas and Judas were the first deicides; but did they not perhaps accept that horrible burden through obedience to God, since Christ descended to this earth in order to be sacrificed and desired to be killed?



## TO THE HEBREWS

Have you never perceived that He did not permit Jewish hands to be stained with His blood? He wished to be nailed upon the cross with alien hands, so that if not your heads, at least your hands, would be clean. Remember that He wept only once, and that one time at the thought of Jerusalem's approaching destruction, Jerusalem, your holy city, that even for us is holy. Even today we are brought together by our tears, Hebrews and Christians, in that very Jerusalem. Even at this very hour you weep at the foot of an ancient wall that no longer encloses the Saint of Saints, nor even the altar of the Most High. Near by, Christians weep over an empty tomb, and not even the stones of that sepulcher are ours.

Does this brotherhood of tears speak not to your heart? I think that Christians should weep with you under the Temple wall—that Temple where Christ argued with the doctors and where he dispelled the money-changers—and that you indeed should come with us to weep at the tomb of the Crucified One, to rejoice with us in the Resurrection.

Why do you not listen now, even today, to the invitation of this old Pontiff who loves you, in spite of your sins and your errors, as you are loved by your God, your God who is also our God? What screen of ice, what veil of clouds separates you from us? Come into our churches and you will hear your own most heart-rending and jubilant psalms. You will hear us pronounce with devoted joy the words of your fathers' language: hosanna, alleluia, amen. Open our hagiographies and you will see that your most famous Patriarchs, Prophets, and Kings are numbered and venerated among our Saints.

You have refused to recognize Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, nevertheless it is you who have preserved and diffused among all people the books wherein are recorded,

point by point, the prophecies of His coming and His goal.

Your fathers desired His death, but they also witnessed His resurrection: the five hundred witnesses of whom St. Paul speaks were certainly Jews. What sorcery, then, divides you from us? Does one not read in your Talmud the precepts of goodness and charity that might appear in the Gospel? Have not many of you, from Saul-Paul of Tarsus, to the great Rabbi of Rome, come to recognize in Jesus the Son of God?

Why, then, do you delay and recalcitrate? Is it perhaps because of the stings of persecution that in every century, including our own, have bloodied and burned your homes, have debased and lacerated your souls? You know that I have condemned these persecutions, that I have suffered because of them and have sought to impede and alleviate them. You know that many of my predecessors have defended you, have gathered you near them, have entrusted their very lives to you. But you must also recall that you were persecuted, and atrociously so, even before Christ: by the Egyptians and Assyrians, by the Seleucidians of Syria and by the Ptolemeians of Egypt. Were not the best of you massacred by your own King Jannaeus, by your own King Herod? You were obliged also to suffer many evils at the hands of Christians, but were you not persecuted by emperors who were also condemning Christians, and later by Mohammed in Arabia? Today, as you know, your enemies are not the Christians but the very enemies of the Christian religion, who cannot forgive you for having seen our faith and our Church born in your midst. Today your enemies are likewise our enemies. Why do you not join with us in the union of martyrdom, as we are already united in the double weeping at Jerusalem? The

Christians have struck you and reviled you; I know it. But were you not, in the Holy City, the first persecutors of the Christians? Were they not Jewish stones that killed our first martyr? Why do you not collect those stones to make of them a monument of reconciliation?

I abhor and condemn all persecutions, and in particular the persecution of the chosen people of Christ. But do you not think that this could be another sign of your mysterious consonance with Christ? Christ was persecuted in His early and late years; the Church, like Him, has been and is at present persecuted. If you were created as a nation in the image and likeness of Christ, you must be beaten, insulted, and crucified like Him. And could it not be that the persecution has been a continual reminder from the Eternal of your fate as eternal wanderers? You began as wanderers among men, and as wanderers you must always remain. To nomads such as you is forbidden a long sojourn in any one place. Not for you the "*hic manebimus optime*." Jesus harshly rebuked Peter because he wanted to erect tents that all might remain on the Mount of the Transfiguration.

You must go to the ends of the earth, but you must never remain anywhere for a long abode. No sooner do you betray this your vocation, this divine destiny, than you are punished, and God uses, in order to punish you, the hatred and envy of the sedentary populations. Ever at your backs are the flashing swords of the angels of Paradise, while before you there is always the column of fire which leads you toward a Promised Land that will be yours only for a brief time.

This condemnation to perpetual vagabondage is your misery, but at the same time, your glory. It demonstrates that your restless spirit, without rest and repose, searches for

a native land which is yours alone, and which you have never yet been able to reach. And who says that this fatherland, permanent and safe, may not be the Church of Christ? I tell you that you will never cease to wander as long as you will not enter into the house of your greatest Son, as long as you do not recognize in the victim of Caiphas the true Messiah for whom you have waited for so many countless centuries.

Do you not see that the life of the Hebrew people is foreshadowed in the Prodigal Son and that we are impatiently awaiting your return in order to prepare the feast, to kill the fatted calf of the parable, which is, in another form, the golden calf of the desert? I promise you, in the name of our common Father, that I will welcome you as a father who has, not words of rebuke on his lips, but tears of joy in his eyes. Together we will reread the words of your Paul, where he speaks of you to the Romans: "For if the loss of them be the reconciliation of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" (Romans 11:15) We know indeed that you are a deicidal people. But if sin—that is, to hate and kill—is, as I think in agreement with the Saints, a repetition of deicide, then what people today are not deicidal? You have marked yourselves with every kind of stain, you are laden with guilt; but what people has not guilt and shame equal to yours, what people has the right to cast the first stone?

More than once you have deserted and saddened the God of your fathers, but yours was a single and a jealous God: it was much easier for the pagans, who had a hundred divinities, to be faithful. Despite everything, you have never been unfaithful to the spirit: in your perennial exile you have always carried those two things most easily carried by fugitives, gold

and the Book. Your purses were stuffed with minted gold, nevertheless you were not without the Book of the Law of the Fathers, of the Prophecy of the Son. This counterbalance will be marked to your credit on the day of account and reckoning.

But it will not be sufficient to save you if you will not first forsake your gold, and if you do not add the Book of Love to the Book of Law. There is still too much pride in your hearts, too much desire for domination in your souls. You practice beneficence, but you are still not filled with the spirit of charity; you are loyal to family and tribe, but you are still far from universal brotherhood; you recognize pride and modesty, but not yet humility.

Do you not realize that since the time Jesus brought to a close, the great Messianic era, which was also your greatest era, you have not given to the world one prophet comparable to those who illuminated the sons of the Ancient Pact? In Christ you destroyed poetry, and from that day the inspiration of the most sublime poetry has abandoned you.

Since St. Paul, who was made splendid by the fulgence and voice of Christ, there has not been among you one man who has known how to speak to the spirit of mankind from the lofty spires of sublimity. This retrocession in the sphere of the spirit is one of the forms of your punishment; perhaps, too, of your expiation.

You have spoken, you have written, you have taught: but since the death of John, you have ceased to serve as torches to the world. The poets and the prophets who came later, even though fiery and ingenious, have never equaled the grandeur of David, of Solomon, of Job, and of Isaiah. In the world of art, everything that was above the average was Christian,

and no longer Hebraic. This withdrawal of great poetry from you—poetry which is a sign of the presence of the Eternal—should give you cause for reflection: in my eyes it is the gravest penalty inflicted upon you since the day of Crucifixion.

But you can re-enter into possession of your primogeniture, if you will accede to becoming part of the family of Christ. He offered to you first, before all others, the pearls of great price, and you disdained to stoop to gather them. Now there is demanded of you a great gesture of humility that will cancel the sin of your pride; now there is required the act of renunciation to your dominion and your treasure.

If you desire to be poor with Christ, denuded as Christ, forgiven and joyful in Christ, every guilt, even the most terrible, will be erased and forgotten. But not before.

We are nearing a new fullness of time. Two thousand years before Christ, Abraham the Chaldean abandoned Ur and its idols. Two thousand years after Christ, if the law is true that the Cross is the center of history, there must come to pass in Israel an altogether different exodus. Your reintegration into the kingdom of the promise is necessary, inevitable, invoked, and awaited. Why do you wait any longer to surrender to this call, which may be the last one?

Of the first divine choice, there has remained to you at least one sign. You are always, in every expression and desire of your being, the people of extremes.

If one of you pursues wealth, he succeeds in becoming the king of bankers and the creditor of kings. But when he is poor, as are the Israelites swarming in the ghettos and villages of Eastern Europe, he is the very picture of poverty. Your Talmudists and cabalists carry analysis to infinity; but

also among you arise mystics of the purest essence, the ecstasies of reason, the intoxicated of the intellectual divinity. Among you flourish the most rigid observers of tradition, and at the same time, overpowering proclaimers of revolution; those who gnaw to the roots the established order of thought, and those who raise to the crystalline sky mathematical monoliths of the intelligence.

For that reason I believe that Christianity with its divine paradoxes, its repulsion for the lukewarm, the tepid, the compromisers, is made for you. As the rivers, the most superb of waters, are destined to flow to the sea, so you are destined for Christianity. The Cross divides us, but when you will have kissed and embraced the Cross, Golgotha will no longer be an obstacle, but the summit of rediscovery. There are people to whom sin and crime were necessary for the discovery of the fulness of the divine revelation; perhaps it was necessary for you to put God to death in order to regain Him through His and your punishment. Perhaps the end of the expiation is close at hand, and I pray that these my words, overflowing from my heart's wounds, may bring it even closer. In this prayer I call upon all the saints of Israel, from Elias to Baal-Shem, for support.

You see in what grave of death, in what fiery furnace, the human race is stretched today. You, too, have suffered; you, too, have left streams of blood in this Gehenna of the survivors. You should realize that the world can be saved only through a higher spiritual unity, and that this unity can be accomplished only under the sign of Christianity. Why, then, are you so slow in answering the challenge?

You sons of the promise, you who were the first to be called to the banquet, why do you still delay in burying your dead,

why do you hesitate to enter into the triclinæ which has for so many centuries awaited your coming? It is your duty to set the example. If you who saw the birth of Christ and heard Him speak in your homes and in your fields; if you continue to deny Him, what will the other peoples say, the most distant peoples, the most remote and most ignorant, those who were not enlightened by His irrefragable presence? What does it matter if among your ancestors some were guilty? In the earthly genealogy of Jesus appear the names of Rahab the prostitute, David the adulterer, Solomon the fratricide; nevertheless He wished, as man, to recognize even these sinners as His ancestors. Indeed, did He not come to take upon Himself the sins of all men, including yours? Did He not come to forgive those who put Him to death, hence even those Jews of Good Friday? Did He not call friend that one among you who, after having sold Him, led His captors in the night? Tell me, when will the clear song of the cock reach your ears, the song that will rouse you from your thousandth denial?

Listen to the voice of this Pope who entreats you, in the name of the Divine Victim, as no Pope has ever supplicated you. It is a feeble voice, a trembling voice, the voice of one who invokes and awaits a death similar to that of his God. It is the voice of a successor—weak and fruitless though he may be—of that Peter of Bethsaida who, like you, was circumcised, who went to the Temple for Easter, who first recognized in the young prophet who was destined for the penalties of slaves, the Son of the living God. My words are feeble and stammering, but even so, I call upon you in the name of Peter, in the name of Christ, in the name of all the Jews who accepted His baptism and His Gospel.



## TO THE HEBREWS

“Hear ye, Israel”: these imperious words that open your daily prayer I repeat to you with the same lips that daily recite the Creed of the Church. God inspires in me the certainty that this Creed will be recited by you together with us, together with me, who awaits you with paternal impatience near the tomb of the Apostle. The salvation of mankind is also in your hands. For the love of our common tears and our common misfortunes, do not frustrate my hope which is also the hope of all the reborn in Christ. The hour of your inevitable return will be celebrated in the entire Church founded in Jerusalem—it will mean peace and happiness for you, pursued and wounded pilgrims, who at last will see in Sinai and Tabor one single mountain of light.

Pope Celestine VI

Servant of the servants of God

## CHAPTER XV

### TO THOSE WITHOUT CHRIST

*My brothers,*

ALTHOUGH YOU ARE far away, dissimilar and divided, although resistant to Christ and not yet redeemed by the Cross, you too are my brothers, brothers in the common lot of humanity, brothers in the faith in divinity which you designate and worship in so many ways. But this too elementary brotherhood, though warm and strong within me, is not enough for my Christian heart that would like to see all men, even to the very last, not one excepted, gathered around the Son of Man who descended to this earth for all men and died for all men.

I do not want to conceal my thoughts from you: I recognize you and love you as so many brothers because I desire and I hope that one day, though it may not be for centuries—perhaps millenniums, you will indeed be our brothers in the love of the reclaiming Risen One. I speak to you, not to condemn the religions in which you live, but to persuade you to accept mine, which is not only the one, true religion, but the only one that can re-unite and save humanity. I come to you as an apostle, that is, as a conqueror. I do not love only those of you who believe in a God that has a thousand names and one single essence, but all those others, as future, desired, and awaited Christians.

The Gospel, which for me is the message of the absolute, is

so clear on this point that it permits neither doubt nor delay. "Go ye, and preach the Joyful News to all men," said Christ to His disciples. Inasmuch as He is the Truth in act and in person, and the Truth must be equal for all and can be denied by none, I tell you that you are inevitably destined to come with us, to be seated at the banquet that the Son, in the Father's name, has prepared for all mankind.

This discourse may seem madness to you, and many even among my own will smile at it. But you must not forget that we have no fear of madness, for the very foundation of Christianity is the madness of the Cross. It is our first duty to be madmen against the homicidal and deicidal wisdom of the world.

Ever since the Resurrection, our Apostles have scattered throughout the inhabited earth to preach the Gospel with their words and to confirm it with their very blood. From that time the work of apostleship has never ceased, and to-day there is no remote island in the seas nor a hut concealed in the forest that is not reached by the word of Christ. Unfortunately, as yet it is only the word and not the full victory of its spirit.

I am not ashamed to confess it, because in the truth one can suffer, but never be ashamed: almost everywhere this work has been in vain. After centuries and centuries of preaching, only perhaps one-quarter of the human race is Christian. Three-quarters of all the living have still not come to Christ. Much has been attempted, and almost nothing has been attained. Thousands and thousands of indefatigable missionaries have endured martyrdom of the spirit and martyrdom of the flesh in your midst; money by the millions has been given by the faithful to the innumerable societies

that in every Christian church promote and support missions; all my predecessors have stimulated and sustained the bearers of the Gospel. Notwithstanding this, almost none of you—when one considers the tremendous multitudes that inhabit Asia and Africa—have come to our faith. There are still today at least three-quarters of mankind—more than fifteen hundred million souls—who are still without Christ. My Church, for example, which in every age has given fearless and intrepid apostles, heroes to the point of sainthood, has succeeded in making its own in the mission countries scarcely one-hundredth part of the souls that by divine right should be ours.

After so many centuries of endeavor, after such an enormous expenditure of patience, endurance, and eloquence, this penurious and meager gathering of fruit must arouse in us chagrin and pain. We have known how to pluck only a few leaves from the endless forest; we have restored to our granaries only a few ears of corn gleaned laboriously in an endless field. Even today hundreds of millions of Hindus, hundreds of millions of Buddhists, hundreds of millions of followers of Confucius, hundreds of millions of Moham-medans, hundreds of millions of idolaters are unaware of, or refuse, the emancipating light of the Gospel. Because of this I am afflicted and pierced by remorse; the thought of our insufficiency and of your absence constrains my heart. I cannot believe that so many Christians, the majority of them, do not also feel the same anguish as I; that they almost never, with stabbing sadness, think of the infinite lost souls, of the infinite hordes that have not yet submitted to the sweet yoke of our Liberator. If the water of the New Testament is life and truth for us, how can we endure with so much torpid

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apathy the knowledge that the majority of mankind is outside of that life and that truth? So much placid resignation both confounds and frightens me.

In the indifference and negligence of so many of my brothers I can find no peace. I am like a father who in his youth had twelve sons and now there remain to him at home but three, and with these he is content, at peace, even though he knows that the other nine are alive and wander far from him, scattered over the earth, perhaps ill, perhaps beggars, perhaps insane, and he is satisfied to send a servant to them every now and then to recall them to the loving paternal roof.

I do not reproach you, my brothers without Christ. I do not want to condemn your resistance, nor denounce your perversity. You are not the real culprits. The real culprits are we—culprits hardened in those sins of omission which are, of all sins, the least worthy of forgiveness. If you delay so long in coming with us, the fault is ours; if you still live in the shadows of God, it is a sign that we have not known how to show you a sun of such magnitude that you would run to it from the darkest confines of the earth.

And all Christians are at fault. And above any other fault, is that of our division. What can you think of a religion founded by one single God, provided with one single book, entrusted to a single shepherd, which little by little has divided into hundreds of churches and sects? Is not your ironic stubbornness excusable when you listen to the apostles of the same faith who teach different doctrines in the name of the same revelation and the one same God?

Another fault, perhaps an even graver one, is the spectacle of our insolent disloyalty to the dictates which we boast of

proclaiming and accepting. Christianity is the religion of love, but Christians know only how to hate—hate others and hate themselves. The Christian religion is the religion of renunciation, yet Christians are as avidly desirous of acquiring and possessing as those who are ignorant of the Gospel. The Christian religion is the religion of the spirit, yet Christians are absorbed in carnal pleasure and material affairs. The Christian religion affirms that its kingdom is not of this world, yet the nations who boast of being Christian have, for centuries, exerted every effort, by means quite different from evangelical, to make themselves masters of the entire world.

In the face of so many shameful contradictions, I understand your hesitancy in accepting Christianity. If the Christians—thus you think—say that there is no truth nor salvation outside of that which Christ taught, why, then, in everyday life do they act entirely contrary to that which they say they believe? By so doing, are they not the daily mockers and face-slappers of Christ? With their actions they insult and repudiate the very things of which they would convince us with words. Hence the manner in which they act is a sure sign that in reality they do not believe what they preach. Why, then, should we accept a God who is neither obeyed nor respected even by those who take their name from Him?

Even this fact is not enough. Another of our mistakes must be blamed for your procrastination. The Christian missionaries are men rich in faith and often even rich in knowledge, but they are not always able to present Christianity to you in that light which will render it more readily conceivable to you. I fear that many of them, for example, do not often enough call to mind this truth: that you are destined to be-

come Christians because Christianity is your work too, that is, the work of your fathers. By becoming Christians you would only be re-entering into a portion of your legitimate inheritance, ineffably and marvelously enriched by the Incarnation. They should tell you that all the great peoples that flourished before Christ have contributed to the divine preparation of Christianity. Ancient Egypt forecast the idea of the resurrection of the dead; India, the principle of sacrifice as an essential act of life, and the renunciation of false material reality; Persia, the diurnal war between good and evil destined to end with the triumph of good through the intervention of a supernatural savior; Greece, the myth of demigod benefactors and liberators, such as Prometheus and Hercules, who suffered for love of mankind; China, the sanctity of filial love as a basis of every human relationship, the necessity of a perfect harmony between heaven and earth; Magna Græcia, with Orphism, the faith that through a perennial purification man must tend to become reunited with the divine; Etruria, the model for the idea that the present life must be guided by the constant thought of the ultimate destination; Rome, the concept that all the living must be disciplined and gathered together under one and the same law. Every great civilization before Christ had no other mission but to present its own characteristic, so that it could be assimilated into the divine synthesis accomplished by Christ. The conquests, wars, and laws of the ancient empires are by now only defunct records buried in the antique cemeteries of erudition; monuments of that far-off era that are only rotting stone and earthy relics. On the other hand, the spiritual truths adumbrated in those millenniums are still a living substance, incorporated as they are in the insuperable, vital

fulfillment of Christianity. God willed that all men would cooperate in collecting the stones for that edifice which in His time the Son would erect so that ultimately all men could there find shelter and refuge. The Christian religion assimilated these ideas, which, separated as they were, could not provide all their effects and results, joined them, enriched them, and exalted them with new elements which came from divine wisdom and from divine mercy. Christ was the executor of this supernatural synthesis accomplished with the fire of His love, the blood of His redemption, the water of His baptism, the sweat of His agony, the wine of His truth, the bread of His fraternal reconciliation in the one Father. Since that day the ancient religions, having done their part, are destined to be sterile, to putrify, to die. All the spiritual history before Christ is a converging of separate lights which fused into the sun that descended into the midst of mankind. The separation, admitted and natural before Christ, is not conceivable after Christ; on the contrary, it is the cause of error and of death. It is no longer lawful to disjoin that which the incarnate God united, by the addition of what at first was lacking and what only God could provide: the gift of the Redemption and the duty of love. These partial similarities between the Christian religion and the religions of the most ancient peoples, which an arrogant and perfidious science has used as an argument against our faith, become, when considered in the providential evidence of the divine plan, one of the most valid stimuli for a new apologetic to the degree that they are testimonies and proof of the scattered survivals of the primitive revelation.

If the apostles of Christ knew how to spread before your



eyes the beauty, the magnificence, the wisdom of this story of Providence, I believe that one of the obstacles to your conversion would be removed. You must be Christians, because Christianity was your achievement too, and in some part forecast by your own minds. The homage of the Magi to Jesus is the mysterious symbol of this pre-Christian collaboration, inspired and willed by God so that the complete truth would be more easily accepted by every people. The Magi are the delegates of the ancient Eastern wisdom who bring to Christ, who was awaited by them, their most precious possessions: myrrh, the promise of the resurrection of the body; the incense, the accompaniment of sacrifice; gold, the splendor of incorruptible truth.

Hence you can neither take back these gifts nor deny that which Christianity has transfigured and integrated with other sublime truths preached by the Second Person of the Trinity. It was conceded to each of your peoples to make a rough draft and adorn one of these stones, but only so that you would be more prepared to feel yourselves as desired brothers in this universal home, which is also a little yours.

In this immense and marvelous home constructed by man and by God, there is a place for each of you. Each one of you is awaited and will be welcomed as a brother who returns to his native land. Approach our doors and do not recoil, disturbed and perplexed, before our emblem. The cross was an instrument of death, but for us and for all men it became the medium and vehicle to a higher life. Perhaps some of you believe, distracted by funereal images which, in order to be understood, must be transformed into images of joy, that Christianity is a doctrine of sorrow and death, in opposition

to the natural love of life which is within you. A Chinese sage or an Arabian patriarch might be ill disposed toward a religion that worships its God's place of execution and presents as a nucleus of its liturgy the history of a punishment. Perhaps some of our preachers or some of our books have aroused in you the suspicion that Christianity is nothing but tears, sighs, lamentations, groans, and torture, that it is the negation of every joy, even the most innocent joy of man. Such a suspicion alienates many of you from us, perhaps entire nations from the faith of Christ, but this is an unjust and ill-founded suspicion, due only to falsifications and distortions of the Gospel.

With an open mind, read the four Gospels from beginning to end. Instantly you will perceive, if within you there is good faith and keen intelligence, that the divine truth came not to deny nor to destroy human felicity, but, on the contrary, to make it stronger and more secure. The Gospel is the story of a tragedy—the most tragic tragedy in all history—but preceded by a poem of matutinal exultation and concluding with the final triumph of a Resurrection and an Ascension. There rise in the Gospel not only the Mount of Olives and Golgotha, but first the Mount of Transfiguration and the mountain of the Beatitudes. Before he died for us, Christ showed Himself as the purveyor of life, giving health to the sick, sight to the blind, cleansing to the lepers, speech to the mute, motion to the paralytics, and life to the dead. His entire message is an annunciation of deliverance, restoration, and remission. He teaches the joy of forgiveness and the joy of salvation. He calls blessed they who weep, but only because one day they will no longer weep but rejoice. He accepts all torments, only that man may be set free from the

slavery of cupidity, the sting of hate, the fear of death. He allowed Himself to be crucified, so that men redeemed by His suffering might better enter into joy. In His own disciples the agony of the crucifixion is immediately afterward compensated and annulled by the joy of the Resurrection.

The atmosphere of the Gospel is not one of inconsolable sadness and benumbing chill. The theme of the royal, fraternal banquet, the theme of the vineyard and of the wine, the theme of the triumphal return and of victory over evil, the theme of the marriage ceremony and of paternity, which recur continually, give the quadruple book its true tone, which is the affirmation of happiness and of life. At moments, there glows within it a nuptial, almost Dionysian quality. Was it not said of Christ's disciples that they seemed as drunken men? And does not the very word Gospel mean, in the language in which it was written, Joyful News? Our saint who knew best how to make the spirit of the Gospel his, did he not succeed in transmuting even sorrow to joy, was it not he who rejoiced in song until his last days?

The Passion is a climax of torment necessary for the redemptory work. But before that there is the festivity of the banquet, the healing of the sick, the miracles of the wine and of the bread, the sweetness of perfumes, the grace of the lilies and of the children, the splendor of Tabor. And above that sorrowful climax is the return of the Risen One to Heaven, the pledge of our ascension.

If the missionaries would know better than I have known, how to tell you the truth which I have here sketched, I believe you would realize that you are closer to us than you perhaps believe. I have honestly admitted our faults; should you not admit yours also, and, above all, that one of not having

meditated profoundly enough on the Christian revelation?

Nevertheless, I have no contempt for your faiths and I joyfully acknowledge the reflections and reverberations of pure light that they contain. The Hindus, the Chinese, the Mohammedans have seen arise among their faiths passionate lovers of divinity, profound teachers of theology, wonderful mystics who rival our own in the consuming fire of their desired union with the absolute and eternal. God is infinitely merciful and has not wished that so many of His sons be precluded from all the ways in which His glory is only dimly seen. The finest among you, even if you are not aware of it, are ascribed to that invisible church which is the model and beginning of the transformation of the visible church into the universal church.

Hence I do not look at your religions with that sense of disdain and almost of alarm that we encounter by chance in many Christians. But you must examine your faiths at least once in your life in the light of, and from the angle of, Christian illumination. You would discover perhaps that the Christian religion contains the best of what you believe, and at the same time something which completes and transcends it.

All your religions were founded by men who presented themselves as men and who died as men, either of illness or of old age, with the exception of Zarathustra, who was killed in battle. No one of them was recognized by his own followers as the incarnation of a God, no one of them offered his own life for the salvation of mankind, no one of them arose from the tomb. They were men of vigorous spirit who not always said they were inspired by God; after death they were

accorded almost divine homage, but none of you venerates them as supreme deities.

The Christian religion is the only religion founded by a God who descended to earth for the salvation of the human race, by a God who manifested His divine nature with indisputable signs, by a God who had Himself put to death for love of those very men who killed Him, by a God who conquered death and came forth from the tomb to ascend into heaven. That He was truly a God was proven not only by His words and those of His disciples, but, even more than by His miracles, by His very doctrine, which is so far above and beyond human instincts and thought that it bears upon it the incontestable stamp of His celestial origin.

The supremacy of Christianity has its foundation in the dual aspect which corresponds to the humanity and divinity of its Revealer; it is, at one and the same time, profoundly human and ineffably divine. As Christ was true man and true God, thus heaven and earth have gone into the making of Christianity, but the earth for us is only that sorrowful and joyful return journey to heaven, and after the completion of the kingdom of the heavens, will be completely reunited with heaven.

Christianity, like Brahmanism, believes in rebirth, but in two rebirths only: in that "second birth," the "metanoia" of inner being; and in that "third birth," the death of the body and its passing into the true, happy, and eternal life.

Christianity too, like Buddhism, recognizes the sorrow of life and the vanity of the visible world, but it does not fly from sorrow, since it knows how to transform it to joy; nor does it fear death, since it knows that death is a birth into a

higher life; nor does it renounce the world, for it knows that the world is the image and symbol of a spiritual and perfect reality.

Christianity, like Hinduism, teaches the necessity of devotion and sacrifice, but its cult is not limited to devotion and sacrifice, but is aimed at the lofty decantation of the spirit; it does not worship the creative and destructive forces in nature, but without denying them, it seeks to conquer them within itself and in the world.

Like Confucianism, Christianity emphasizes as one of its goals the harmony between heaven and earth as the principle and model of harmony among men; it recognizes the foundation of human society in filial veneration and in universal benevolence, but it is not content with this ordered calm, completely philosophical and terrestrial: it invites men to rise from benevolence to charity, from filial respect to brotherly love, from the worship of heaven to the conquest of heaven. It does not suffice Christianity to form a society of good citizens; there must be legions of spiritual heroes who climb to union with the absolute.

Christianity, like Islam, desires the humble submission to one God, and does not condemn the most natural forms of human life. But this submission is the promise and road to future liberty, that recognition of vital needs in a concession to human weakness, and does not reach the point of legitimizing polygamy and war.

Your religions, in short, have their roots now in this, now in that need of the common human spirit, but they do not transcend them nor surmount them, nor do they seek to step over them, nor to substitute trans-human and deifying ideals.

## TO THOSE WITHOUT CHRIST

The repulsion of sorrow and death common to all men lead the Buddhists to preach the annihilation of the individual in the one Being; the aspiration to a reasonable and peaceful order, an aspiration common to all men, bring the Confucianists to a mere storehouse of civic morality and the golden mean. The enjoyments that women and war promise, enjoyments avidly desired by the majority of men, lead the Mohammedans to proclaim as holy the extermination of infidels and to imagine a paradise much too similar to the court of an Eastern emperor, with its garden of delights and its harem.

Your religions are human, much too human, completely human: hence they cannot be, as is Christianity, of divine origin and essence.

I have always ardently desired to have a knowledge of all your languages and dialects, and to come amongst you in order to show you with splendid and powerful words the beauty of our faith, in all the dramatic magnificence of its truth. Only Christianity can answer all the anxious demands of man, can satisfy all his hungers, strengthen his humanity, and accompany him to divinity. Christianity is a triple trilogy ideated and realized by that completely divine Poet who is to the poets of this earth as the loftiest mountain is to the scattered stones on the banks of a ditch.

The first act of the first trilogy is the Creation of the universe; the second is the Redemption, which is the promise and the help in the ascent; the third, the Restitution of the earth to heaven, of man to God.

In the second trilogy, we see the first act, the conflict between man and God, the Fall; the second, the reconquering

of the light in man by means of the Incarnation; the third, still in process, the race between man dignified by Christ and the power of the Adversary.

In the last trilogy we see the three worlds superimposed and yet united: the Trinity, ineffable center of the choral of angels intoxicated by light and song; Paradise, with its happy throng of redeemed patriarchs, far-seeing prophets, smiling martyrs, exultant saints, blessed contemplatives, enamored virgins, ecstatic mystics; finally, on the earth below, amid the dark tempests relieved by occasional flashes of serenity, the army of Christians purified in prayer and pain so that it may leave its exile and climb to its fatherland. Men implore the help of the saved; the saints, from above, intercede so that every mortal may ascend, saved, to be reunited with them; to the blessed, God concedes His vision, to the militant Christians, His grace.

The universe, divided in appearance, is luminously conjoined in every part; history broken into fragments in time is only a single moment in eternity; the dead live in the splendor of immortality; the living await death to arise to the true life; the divine poem is an immanent and transcendent tragedy ending in joy. A God who creates the world, in other words, the tragedy, so that man may enjoy divinity; a God who becomes man in sorrow so that man may rescale the heights to happiness; a multitude of those immersed in God who aid the multitude of tormented; the communion of saints, the model and prelude of the primordial and final communion between man and God.

I should like to sing for you this cosmic and mystical poem, I should like to recite it for you in couplets and strophes modulated in the language of the cherubim, I should like to teach



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you this brilliant epic wherein is circumscribed the human journey in a quadrant that marks the instant and eternity for all. If you could pronounce with me this rapturous masterpiece that opens with a paean and closes with a dithyramb, if you could succeed in scanning the verses of this hymn of brotherly love that no terrestrial imagination would be able to conceive, I know your veiled eyes would be opened to that joyous resplendency which illumines and inflames my whole being.

God cannot permit you to be deprived too long of this happiness: and hence from this moment I salute you as so many future brothers.

In spite of everything, you believe in an absolute principle of being; despite all, you wish to obey this principle and remain in contact with it; despite all, you believe, as we, that this life is not the true life but only a beginning, a shadow of another life; despite all, you are our brothers because you have contributed to Christianity or you have drawn sustenance from it, and you must reach Christianity even though it may be on the furthest distant day. You, too, know the necessity of unity for the human race, and I say to you in the name of God and all men created by Him, that there can be no true unity unless it be spiritual, that is, religious. The Christian religion awaits you with patience and hope, and every century redoubles its love for you, because the love of Christ transcends those walls which divide us, scatters your resistance and distrust, envelops your souls in its inextinguishable splendor. I pray for your escape from darkness as I pray for the separated Christians, for the Hebrews, for all men who dwell on the earth but suffer the nostalgia of heaven. If my words can bring that day nearer, even by one hour,

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one instant, that day of total unity, I will believe that I have not lived in vain. Christ, from the height of Heaven, will surely come to the aid of this His Vicar, who has never betrayed the dream of leading all mankind back to His right hand.

Pope Celestine VI  
Servant of the servants of God

## CHAPTER XVI

### TO THOSE WITHOUT GOD

*My sons,*

YOU DO NOT RECOGNIZE me as a father, you will refuse to listen to the word of a Roman Pontiff, head of a Church which is condemned by you to death and which appeals to a God who is dead. Nevertheless I will speak. You are without God, and hence the most destitute of men; you glory in having killed God, and hence you are the most insolent of criminals. But God who enjoins me to speak to you—that God who already was killed in Jerusalem and whom you wish to kill once and for all—came on this earth for love of the destitute and the sinners, and I must, for His love, imitate Him as far as I am able. And so I love even you, and not only because you hate me but because I know you are unhappy, with that crude, barren unhappiness that is so badly concealed beneath the arrogance of your blasphemy.

Fear not that I desire to lead you into the divine forest of Theology, which for you is only a sterile clump of thorns and brushwood destined to burn. I will not tell you why I believe in God, nor why one must believe in God, nor why one cannot do without believing in God. When grace is lacking, the most subtle arguments of reason are of little use. I can only exhort you to read the Gospel with a pure spirit: if you do not feel in those words, in those deeds, in those accents, the presence of divinity and the imprint of truth, surely

the proofs of our apologetic will not succeed in convincing you.

Instead, I wish to call you to an examination of conscience. You accuse the Christians of believing in God through motives both ignoble and ridiculous. I say to you that you do not always recognize the hidden motives of your negation.

The first of such motives is the instinctive fear that faith in God is an obstacle to the license of sin, that it is the abrogation of impunity. With ill grace you tolerate the yoke of human laws rendered necessary by the human proclivities to crime. That there can be, beyond these codes that forbid and punish the commonest misdeeds, a divine law imposed by the will of a most powerful Being and superior to all laws, a law which considers sin even that which eludes all other earthly considerations, a law which carefully examines men's hearts so that the secret malice of desire cannot escape from it, a law that threatens harsh and lasting penalties to transgressors; that, in short, there can be a supplement to the prohibitions and restraints of the evil-wishing and evil-doing, leads you to deny the Author of this supreme law, who is at the same time, the Author of the universe. Man is predisposed to kill man, and the Gospel considers homicidal even one single thought of offending one's brother, even the slightest desire that he die. Man is inclined to steal the wealth of others, and the Gospel advises the rich to give away their possessions. Man is completely steeped in carnal concupiscence, and the Gospel not only condemns fornication but calls him an adulterer who even looks desirously at the wife of another. The majority of men—even those who call themselves Christian—usually pay no heed to this divine law, which they deem exaggerative and for all intents and

purposes impracticable. Hence men sin every day, even those who affirm their belief in God. However, there always remains in the believing sinners a discomfort, a scruple, an increasing sense of discretion, of remorse and fear. The law of God does not succeed in preventing all sins, but it makes them bitter and painful, subject to penitence and expiation, thus rendering them more and more tormenting and, in the end, more rare. The Christian law has not yet attained the extirpation of evil, but it has succeeded, at least in the best eras and in the best souls, in diminishing the quantity, the boldness, and the virulence of it. You seek to snatch away even this last embankment against human perversity. In your mind the Gospel is only a fantasy, a hallucination of a dreamer; the Decalogue only an invention of a caste of priests, in good or bad faith. The divine law has no supernatural foundation; Christ is not God, God does not exist. The human animal wishes to remove the last impediments; he subjects himself perforce to the crude laws of the states, but for all else he wishes to make his the cry of the leader of the Assassins: Nothing is true, everything is permitted. Deicide is only one form of the insurrection of the beast that is in every man against a God who desires man to be like unto Himself, even in purity, even in love.

Hate boils and ferments in the depths of every fallen creature, hate that is hidden and repressed by fear, timidity, weakness, but is more or less alive and voracious in every spirit, ready to burst forth and overflow as soon as impunity is assured. The crucial point in the teaching of Christ is the condemnation and the curing of hate. But if there is no God, if Christ is not God, His doctrine is a human fantasy, fallible and refutable. The negation of God hence appears necessary

for the ratification or the pardon of the most inextirpable instinct of man. The second death of Christ would permit the proclamation of the right to hate.

Hate has another still more horrible name: murder. And indeed we have seen in our times, as the natural consequence of the advancement of atheism, the frightful progress in the art and practice of the destruction of men. We have seen in every land such carnage and tremendous slaughter that by comparison the auto-da-fé of the Inquisition and the night of St. Bartholomew were mere rough drafts of timid precursors. Atheism, by legitimate dialectics, carries out the unleashing of the "*homo homini lupus*."

For centuries men have fought against the various masters who have weighed heavy on their necks. And they have arrived at the wish for the death of the Supreme Master, the death of Him who dominates even the dominators and who can subdue even the recalcitrant. With restless intolerance they accept their mortal masters; they at least wish to free themselves from the eternal master. And here is manifested even to the blindest your own audacious blindness.

You wish to be free, and you are right and just in wishing complete liberty. But have you not understood that the major obstacle to such a desire is your own lupine and apelike nature? As long as you are repressed wild beasts, ready to extend the tongues of greed and the nails of hate, there will always be among you, guardians, codes of laws, tyrants, and tamers. Have you still not understood that you cannot be free, divinely free, until in spirit and in everyday practice you accept the law of God, which is the law of love? "The truth shall make you free," said Christ. And indeed this is the absolute truth: either man de-bestializes himself or he

will forever be the slave of himself and of others. "Love, and do as you wish," <sup>1</sup> wrote St. Augustine. To deny God and His command means to deny perfect freedom. You wish to destroy God in the hope of obtaining greater liberty, and you do not realize that you wish to destroy the only One who can make you free. Christ is a Redeemer, that is, a Liberator. If you have the courage to follow Him you will see your masters, who weigh upon you, vanish; those masters that only your resistance to the practice of the Gospel so sadly makes necessary.

Do not say that the Church was always allied with the powerful and so was an accomplice to man's slavery. Christianity was born as a promise of freedom and hence was ferociously fought by the heads of nations. Glance over the history of the Church and you will see that all, from the emperors of the first centuries to the leaders of our century, have opposed and decimated Christians. On the other hand, the Church, well aware that the majority of men are not able to feel and act in accordance with the Gospel, that is, that they are not worthy of true liberty, could not make itself the initiator of revolt and revolution. In order to exercise the unchaining of the beasts it was obliged to advise, as it now advises, at least the respect of the human laws, provisional remedies against the bestial instincts of the many. Become Christians in fact and not only in name, and the Church will become, as it was so often, an army and an asylum of liberators.

But I would not have the right to be sincere with you, were I not pitilessly sincere concerning myself and my Church. Nor can I keep unspoken a tremendous question: Has the Church done all it should have done so that men, or at least

<sup>1</sup> Comment on St. John's Gospel. (Translator's note)

its sons, would become integrally Christian—in other words, free? Have the priests of the Church and the Pontiffs themselves given that example of the perfect life according to the Gospel that was necessary to invite efficaciously the faithful and the unfaithful to the pure love of Christ? Did they always renounce greed, avarice, licentiousness, rancor, resentment, hate? Have they always had sufficient fire within themselves, in their words and actions, to burn up the sediments and dregs of sin in others? Are the souls of the many unconverted, only because of the survival of the savage dregs or perhaps because of the shortcomings of many among them who were pledged to convert them? I speak to you from the fullness of my heart—and God is the witness of my honest will toward good: Have I done everything in my power to draw men, willingly or unwillingly, to the transfixed feet of the Liberator who descended from heaven? If I am at fault—and I hope not to be—I can only ask forgiveness of God and of those men who through my sin of omission have not come to God.

But our negligence is not enough to excuse the pertinacity of your negators and re-negators. Your negation is not born solely from nostalgia of animalism, but even more from forms of pride—above all, your intellectual pride. They who describe and interpret the visible universe refuse to recognize a beginning of things, that first mystery which is the creation. The rise of the world from nothing to the order of the divine word is inconceivable to them and insulting to that intelligence which is their boast. They do not perceive, these jugglers of formulas, that the very eternity of matter itself is equally incomprehensible to the human mind, because a thought constrainedly enclosed in time, that is, in finity, can-



not perceive and conceive absolutely the non-beginning, eternity. For us the eternity of God is an article of faith; the eternity of the world is for them, if they would honestly scrutinize their own words, *flatus vocis*, deprived of meaning. In place of the Creator they wish to put those obscure and indefinable entities: matter, ether, energy, light; but the most loyal among these ingenious cosmic architects openly confess that the essence of these concepts of physics is more mysterious and unknowable than the tenets of Theology. The Creation *ex nihilo* is a great mystery, but one so mysterious that it illumines, clarifies, and solves all other mysteries. Not by chance did the most famous astronomers honestly believe in God.

But this intellectual pride is more a professional pride than an irremedial arrogance. The most profound cause for the denial of God is something else: envy and jealousy. Man, drunk with the undeniable conquests of his knowledge and domination over matter, has always had a secret desire to elevate himself above his humanity, to equalize himself with God, to substitute himself for God. In more remote times with magic, and in more recent times with philosophy, science, technique, he has dreamed of being able to snatch from God those attributes of which he is most envious: omniscience and omnipotence. Having deciphered some laws of the universe, having subdued some forces of nature, man believes that he is capable of replacing God and ascending His throne. All human history is filled with this vain desire of usurpation. The Titanic myths, the deification of emperors, the vainglory of magicians, the ambitions of metaphysicians, the audacious challenges of scientists are all evidences of man's perennial desire to attain divine dignity. Man wants

to do without God, he wishes to destroy God, not because he maintains that the existence of a God is impossible, but because he wants to succeed God, to substitute himself for God; he himself wants to be a God. One of the occult roots of atheism is the obsession of rivalry, the grudging envy of the inferior toward the superior.

But no mathematical hypothesis, and no machine, no matter how prodigious, will ever redeem the basic ignorance and impotence of man. Man was created in the image of God, and he can fully reacquire this likeness which was obscured by the Fall. Christianity, too, promises man's deification, but in a quite different sense and manner from that of which the boasting half-wise dream. If man succeeds in living in the pure light of God Incarnate, he can participate in the glory and beatitude of divinity. He can become like to God, but only in so far as he is united to God in love and desire, not merely as an imitator, an heir, or as an usurper. "Know ye not," said Paul, "that we shall judge the angels?"<sup>2</sup> Hence we shall be even above the angels, but only through the grace of divine investiture. To imitate Christ in the perfection of charity is the prerogative of the saints who will share forever in divine splendor; to rave of expelling God and taking His place is demoniac infatuation, ridiculous delusion of grandeur, arrogant insanity.

One can not do without God. And since God exists, beyond any human envy or doubt, we can only reach Him by loving Him in obedience and obeying Him in love. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect,"<sup>3</sup> said Christ, and this is the narrow but only path to human

<sup>2</sup>I Corinthians 6:3.

<sup>3</sup>Matthew 5:48.

deification. Even you, you destroyers of God, or avoiders of Him, do not succeed in doing without some pallid substitute of the supreme Being. Some of you worship Humanity, others Reason or Science, still others Fate, or even Nothing. But these counterfeit deities are nothing but too human fetiches. They are rational or irrational hypostases that do not transcend the human order. They are not only theophanies but pretentious "anthropophanies." A God is not a true God if in essence, nature, and power He is not *toto cælo* different from man, above all creatures. These miserable human deities are only proofs of your own unsatisfied hunger for divinity.

The living God, the true God who offers you Christianity, is the only One who can quench your thirst and bring peace to your ailing spirits. Not only is He the mystery which gives reason to every other mystery, but He is the shadow which dissolves all the shadows of heart and intellect; He is the inconceivable which makes one better able to conceive the conceivable, He is the fear that saves us from all terrors, the obedience that frees us from all slavery, the infinite that makes the finite intelligible, the charity that pities and forgives all.

In truth, without knowing it, you seek God, you seek Him by oblique routes because the main road appears obstructed to you and polluted by the too unfaithful faithful. You imagine God to be an obstacle to the only happiness that seems desirable and attainable to you, but since you seek happiness not only for yourselves but for others, you once again pursue God, who is the essence of happiness, who wants all men to be happy. You call on God in the very act of turning away from Him.

You retreat and enrage yourselves in vain: God is within

you even at this moment, and you cannot but find Him if you will go down deep enough into the life of your spirits. He is present in many of you, in your brotherly love, in your denial of injustice, in your desire for freedom and redemption, in your very hatred of that evil which corrupts and distorts life. If there is in you a generous motive, that motive is God; if you are suffering because of human martyrdom, that suffering is God; if you have a pure wish for a greater enlightenment of mankind, that wish is God. Not even in you has every likeness to God been annulled, and since you are made by Him and for Him, you cannot help but discover even that narrow place where God is present, even if now He seems unrecognizable to you.

When you have traversed all the roads that lead away from Him, you will discover Him suddenly there where not one of you expects to meet Him. You have tried to escape Him, but since He is present in every drop of being, and hence in every fiber of your spirit, you cannot escape Him. If you love the poor, you love Him; if you worship man, you worship His masterpiece and a shadow of His image. You believe you deny God, and you only deny an inadequate concept of Him, an imperfect definition, a confused image that in no wise resembles Him.

You cannot do without the truth, and the truth is in God; you cannot do without love, and God is the artery and source of every love. You have abandoned God, but He has not abandoned you. Even when you insult Him, He looks at you with sorrow but not malediction, because He knows that when a son rebels against his father his blood is of the very same essence of him who generated him and loved him.

I am sure that all of you, one after another, turning back  
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from your journeys of desertion, will recognize His image within your very selves, will feel again the warmth of a hand that has never left you, will dissolve the knots of denial and doubt in joyful tears.

Do not refuse His invitation, do not turn away from His mercy. Hear my prayer, which is the prayer of a man who suffers also for you. That you are orphans moves me even to tears, although I know that you are orphans through your own fault, since deicide is patricide. To deny God is to belittle man, to abandon, dwarf, mutilate man. Conjoined with God, we can become sparks of His light; separated from Him, we are only filthy particles of dust in the wake of death.

Pope Celestine VI

Servant of the servants of God

## CHAPTER XVII

### TO ALL MEN

*My sons and brothers,*

I HAVE SPOKEN to many kinds of men, but I have still not said everything. My heart, consumed with sadness but ever filled with love and hope, will have no rest until I have made its human pulsation felt in every creature of the human family. Would that I had, like the first apostles, the gift of tongues; would that my words were loving swords of truth, that I could possess the power of art, the great power of love, the omnipotence of a miracle, so that my call, my last call, would reach all ears, could move all hearts. Although I am the Pope, today I only want to be a beggar. I come to beg of each man one sole alms: that he listen to me. Listen to me then: not for love of me but for love of yourselves, because I love all of you with that Love which burns and dissolves me. Listen to me, all of you, of whatever race and country, male and female, you young who lean out anxiously over the parapets of the future, you old already divided between dreams of life and thoughts of death, whether you tarry amid the ashes of irrevocable yesterdays or whether you are blinded by mirages of impossible tomorrows. You must all listen to me, because I speak of each and every one of you.

I will not remind you of the evils you have already endured, nor those, perhaps even more horrible ones, that threaten you; you know them only too well. I bring you, in-

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stead, the joyful annunciation of an assured hope. You can remedy and avoid these evils if you desire what I tell you. A total confession and a radical conversion will save you and your sons forever. The catastrophe can be postponed; all is not yet lost. The greater the adversities, the more we must conquer; the thicker the darkness, the more we must shine; the more freezing the climate, the more we must blaze.

First of all, you must see yourselves as you really are, raising the visors and tearing off masks so that you may humbly and boldly look into the mirror which I place before you, a mirror neither distorting nor flattering. In order to heal the wounds, we must first unbandage them, even if at first it is more painful.

You are not that which you say you are, nor what you believe you are.

You imagine yourselves civilized beings, and I tell you that you are still savage or barbarous. Up to this very moment, all your vaunted progress has consisted in the passage from savagery to barbarism. The inventions, amusements, expensive clothes, ornaments, the make-up and trappings of so-called "culture" have served only to deceive you. Revolutions, invasions, capitulations, collusions, and conflagrations were sufficient to destroy these mainstays of civilization and remove the rouge of moral decency. There instantly reappeared the savagery of the prehistoric era, the barbarism of the iron age, the wild beast in ambush. At one blow, respect for others' property and even respect for the lives of others vanished. In the name of force, hunger, justice, civilization, men have become thieves and murderers—thievery retail and wholesale, murder individual and collective. The continents where civilization was first born and flowered have become

theaters of pillaging and slaughter. No one could any longer be sure of anything, neither of his possessions nor his very life. The invasions of the barbarians in the antique world was, compared to this, a small incursion of a tame wolf-pack.

You believe yourselves to be religious, and instead you are without law and without God, atheists who pray, unbelievers who genuflect, disciples of Satan in practice who in form and word profess loyalty to God. You invoke the angels, and you live like devils; you venerate the saints, and you live like swine; every once in a while you raise your eyes to the heavens, and yet you revel in the earth's garbage like lotus-eating worms. You offer to your gods that which costs you the least, genuflections, the pronouncing of words, sacrifices both bloody and bloodless, incense and singing, but rarely do you know how to offer either your spirit or your life. Your heart does not belong to eternity; it is enslaved by the belly, by sex, by consuming greed, and by murder. Whatever may be your faith, your mythology, your theology, you are, almost without exception, in the conduct of your daily lives, pupils, followers, and servants of the Devil. You are brutes erect on your hind feet who daily love and serve only one divinity: your own egos.

You believe yourselves rich and powerful, when in reality you are poor and weak. Your wealth is only an insidious misery and your power nothing more than an exhausting servitude to worldly goods. The people are overwhelmed and torn by whirlwinds that they originate but that immediately escape their control; the governments are prisoners and victims of an impetuous and tempestuous force that they cannot succeed in mastering; individuals are harassed, beaten, and crushed by the fluctuations of history, as twigs



and grains of corn in the vortex of a violent typhoon. You have succeeded in leashing a few forces of nature, but the machines designed for such service have become your masters; you have unchained the dormant energy of the earth and now, like so many sorcerer's apprentices, you can neither restrain nor subdue them. Your will is strong, but so disordered and superimposed upon the intrigues of passions, illusions, ambitions, reasons, and intentions that it has ended by creating an untamable monster, it has depressed and suppressed its own primitive liberty. Hence you are barbarians, at once epicurean and impotent, slaves of savage instincts, of delusive pleasures, of your machines in revolt. You are so frenzied that through love of life you destroy the very reasons for living; obsessed madmen who tear themselves to pieces with their own hands.

Now, impoverished and horrified by so many conflicts that have brought fearful dread and rage to the vanquished, chains and the burdens of new responsibilities to the victorious, you desire and invoke peace. But you cannot find it nor obtain it, for you imagine that war is outside you, in the rages and greed of a few men, while all the time, it is actually within the souls of all of you. Each one of you is at war, perennially fighting with someone: with his class, with his government, with his neighbor, with his master, with his rival, with his father or his son or his brother, with those near and those far away. Each one of you lodges and cultivates within himself the madnesses, the sins, the concupiscences that plunge human creatures into war. The desire to appropriate the goods of another by any means, the desire to annihilate one's enemy by any method smolders, recognized or not, in every soul. Judges, alienists, confessors, historians well know

just how violent and virulent within the so-called "virtuous" are the stimuli of those innumerable secret and inner wars which prepare the atmosphere for outer and civil wars. These desires curbed by fear, by reflection, and by prosperity in peaceful times, are unleashed and given vent to in times of tumult and disorder. Is it small wonder that nations composed of rapacious and bestial men allow themselves to be led and drawn into wars that are nothing less than gigantic and admitted undertakings of wholesale thievery and extermination? How can the leaders resist the temptation to wrangle, those leaders who personify and rule the quarrelsome and bellicose masses who are so addicted to violence? You are fighters in your very blood, and yet you deprecate war; you have always within you the ferment and dregs of war, and yet you propose universal peace. You are, all in your own ways, inclined to plundering and killing, and yet you expect the nations composed of you men to renounce that thieving which is conquest and that butchery which is war. Peace must first reign in your spirits and then, as a natural consequence, it will reign on earth.

But you do not understand this fatal contradiction of your own nature. You are like lambs with ferocious hearts, who, cowering in your enclosures, trembling with fright but itching with lasciviousness, admire the exploits of the leopards and jackals, but are ready to shriek when you yourselves are seized by those merciless claws. You accept the idea of war because the fighting instinct is within you, but you then want to deny the consequences: the humiliations of defeats, the burdens and responsibilities of victory, famines, hunger, pestilence, rebellions.

Now I tell you, with all the love that springs from your

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sorrow, what is the true and only secret of salvation: the unity of all men newly restored in Christ. Division is the real sin against humanity. Divisions of castes, classes, races, factions, nations, religions. Wars with all their evils arise from this denial of brotherhood desired by one Father. It is necessary to fill up the trenches, level the furrows, destroy the barriers, erase the borders. Mankind will have no peace until he has acquired the total unity of all its sons on earth under the banner of the Son of Man. Spiritual unity, political unity, social unity. The last two are not possible without the first, without spiritual unity, and this can only be obtained in the Christian religion. Only faith in Christ and the effective practice of His teaching can make all men one loving family, for only Christianity can change beasts into civilized men, barbarians into brothers. Humanity cannot be saved unless it becomes "catholic," in other words universal, in one truth and one God.

*Transform yourselves in order to unite:* this is the slogan of salvation. De-bestialize yourselves in order to immerse yourselves in God. Complete obedience to an enfleshed God (incarnate) will make possible a celestial (transfigured) man. An undertaking which because of its difficulty seems to graze the impossible, but there is no other road. It may take centuries, perhaps millenniums to accomplish this, but we must at least begin: every delay increases the pursuing danger and the distance to be surmounted. Men have consecrated themselves for much too long a time to the domination of material goods; the hour has now arrived when they must turn to the transmutation, conversion, and domination of their own spirit. To change existing orders and governments accomplishes nothing as long as man remains, in his innermost

being, a wolf in sheep's clothing, a hyena disguised as a humanitarian, a fox in a demigod's toga, a gorilla in a teacher's robe. The "metanoia," in an evangelical sense, is the premise for the necessary saving unity.

This unity is so strong in God's designs that, almost unknown to themselves, men have prepared and do prepare for it through the wars arising from the divisions within mankind. From the family men have passed to clans and tribes; from tribes to *polis*, to cities ruled by tyrants or laws; from these cities made ambitious by wealth to regional states; from states to conquering people; from people united in nations, to empires. We have arrived in our times at the point where four or five vast hegemonic empires hold in their hands, almost as colonies and vassals, the minor surviving states, but already dimly seen are the great continental unities. Unity obtained in such a way required millenniums and will require centuries more; it is obtained by force of ruins, convulsions, sacrifices, tumults, conflicts. Every step ahead took an immense tribute of blood and misery. Men were obliged to pay with the loss of peace and life for that imperfect and unstable unity that they could have acquired, quickly and without torture, by a spontaneous agreement of love. Humanity for its last stage must choose between two roads: the long and bloody one, or the short and bloodless one. If you truly have any feeling for yourselves and you want to avoid further wars, which threaten to be universal destruction and suicide, you must choose the second road.

But I repeat to you that no unity is possible without spiritual unity. The world must become Christian or it will perish. The moment of the supreme alternative has come. Man must

choose. Either he returns to the pure bestiality which followed the Fall, or he must depart from it forever. The present state is the worst of all. Man has not the animal-like happiness of a brute, but must endure penitence, remorse, and the scruples that spring from his divine destination, denied but not forgotten. You have before you two choices, only two: either beasts pledged to suicide, or Christians redeemed and redeemers.

Openly and in practice you have denied Christianity. But you cannot withdraw from the divine will that rules, inspires, and governs everything. You believe that you escaped from the practice of the Gospel's precepts, and yet your own errors have forced you to be subject, by force of circumstance, to the harshest of precepts.

You have scorned Christ, who had not one stone on which to lay His head, and you have seen your homes crumble and your cities destroyed. Many of you, like Him, were forced to become fleeing and pursued nomads.

You have forgotten His advice to renounce wealth, and many of you have lost and are losing that which you dreamed of possessing, that which was your love and your pride.

You have not wanted to receive the baptism of spiritual fire promised by Saint John, and you have seen a quite different fire descend upon you from the skies, a terrifying and rending fire.

You scorned every law of abstinence, have bloodied your hands with the hope of filling your stomachs ever more copiously, and you are now reduced to begging penury, to enforced sobriety, to starvation.

More than was just, you favored and pampered the life of

the body, and behold now the innumerable creatures who were your support and your affection have lost their lives in atrocious ways.

You have searched for the things of the material world more than for those of the immaterial world, and now the eagerly desired goods of this world tyrannize over you and impel you to new slaughters.

You were rebellious to God, and you have fallen under the multiple slaveries of political powers, of detainers, of monopolists of this world's goods, of military necessities, of your own immoderate passions. The truth of the Gospel, which should have been freedom and happiness for you, if welcomed spontaneously, has become, through your wrong-doing, punishment.

Willingly or unwillingly, there is no evading Christianity, because it is not lawful to save one's self from that which saves. Even in the spiritual world, all the defenses and offensives with which you have tried to oppose Christianity by new faiths and doctrines are but parts or counterfeits of Christianity itself. All the philosophical heresies, all the sects and lay churches, all the social and revolutionary theories that have germinated in recent centuries are nothing but attempts to grasp one element of the Christian synthesis, omitting or denying all the others. But that element, healthful and efficacious as long as it remains fused and joined in the divine synthesis accomplished by Christ, becomes a dangerous cause of error when it is torn from the whole and assumed as a unique principle of truth. Here, also, division is a sin against the spirit. It is not lawful to divide that which God wishes to unite. Torn from revealed unity, distorted with the pretext of transforming them into their own absolutes, those prin-

ciples become corrupt and sterile. The promise of Paradise becomes the desire for the land of Cockaigne, the obligation of work is transformed into the confiscation of the fruits of others' labor, the command to charity falls into icy philanthropy, brotherly love becomes rational or conventional solidarity. That which in the supernatural light of Christian synthesis was a healing drug is converted, in the human and earthy order, into a poison. Christianity must be welcomed everywhere by all men: outside this there is no secure health for humanity, for humanity is its own enemy. A mutilated Christianity is a withered or treacherous Christianity. The real redemption of the human spirit can be reached only in that complete reversal of instincts and values taught by the Man-God. The lists of barbaric rights must be replaced by the lists of evangelical tasks.

There are in evidence only two types of men today: economic man, with all his appetites; and the man of God, with all his certainties. The first reigns in the present and has brought the world to the extreme margins that border upon annulment of life; the other awaits his reign in the future, a reign of harmony and sublimation of joy and reconciliation. Everything that until a little while ago concealed or made less apparent the antagonism of these two types of men—philosophy, theory, the conceptions of the bourgeoisie—is in dissolution or is crumbling. After the infernal tempest, the plans have failed, the veils have fallen: the two extremes, between which we must choose, are revealed in their elementary nudity. On one side is the starving, fratricidal barbarian; on the other the generous and loving saint. Everything else is mere rhetoric. We have arrived at the ultimate dilemma: Love or Death.

The so-called "civilization" about which the prophets and servants of the material world are making such a clatter can offer to men only one ideal: a mediocre physical well-being, mechanical and equalizing, that is, enslaving and leveling. Only Christ can promise full happiness in liberty and unity. If even the old Western cultures, already moribund by the temporary triumph of economic man, are being swept away, one must not be grieved nor frightened. The Christian truth, the divine and hence eternal truth, can be obscured for an hour or a period of time, but not destroyed. Neither money, nor machines, nor the economic equalization can quiet the uneasy spirit of men. They have already experienced with tears and blood the price of the torments that these myths of cunning infantilism generate. The great principles of the Gospel will survive, despite all the senseless madness of barbarous adolescence. If the vainglories of human triumphs widened the distance from Christ, the wretchedness following upon these infernal triumphs will lead back to Christ.

Until now you were torpid and fearful beasts; now you are ambitious and pompous barbarians: always, however, slaves and murderers. You must rise now to civilization, which is humanity and Christianity. I announce to you the beginning of a new era in the history of the world, the initiation of a new epoch, which must have a new appearance and a new name. After the prehistoric age came the famous Antiquity; after this followed the Middle Ages; and the Middle Ages were succeeded by the Modern Age, in which you have such pride but which has brought the fruits of death and is visibly on the verge of general ruin. The time that I await and announce will be an era of union and peace, the reign of heaven



over earth, the empire of Christ in your hearts. When men have formed one single immense family, all restored to divine dignity in the transfiguration of Love, when all men pray to one God, and not only in words, when they recognize one single law, not only because of fear, then mortals, reconciled in God, will have conquered every threat of death. It will be the true resurrection of man prefigured by the resurrection of Christ. The bloody, barbaric millennium is our sepulcher: I would like to be one of the angels who said to the women, in the first light of dawn: He is not here.

If the prayer of only one of us, even of the most humble of heart, has such power with Him who made Himself man among men, can you imagine the power of our prayer when jubilant hymns of gratitude rise together, in the same instant, with the same words, from the lips of all mankind? The angels will be moved, the human heart of Mary will tremble with exultation, the "I thirst" from the Cross will have its answer, the entire firmament will never have heard an impetration so joyful, so imperious. One supreme grace, that my leap and dance of joy scarcely knows how to visualize, will be the answer of the Eternal to the choral prayer of the ephemeral.

You will say that this is a dream or a delirium of a feverish old man. But even if it were a delirium—and I believe that it is a premonition of an imperative event—it is a delirium of a fever that should burn in all of you. It is a fever that arises from a not despairing sorrow, an ardent and happy fever that springs from the boundless love I feel for you. If I did not love you as I do, I would not suffer as I do at the thought of your suffering, and the horrible fate that you are preparing for yourselves. I am not ashamed to dream, when reality ap-

pears to all, and not to me alone, shameful and terrifying as never before. If the truth of life today is only a presentiment and foreboding of abysses and infernos, we must indeed take refuge in a dream and use every ounce of our strength to make that dream materialize.

I have spent many years, too many years, on this earth, but my heart is still young because I have kept it close to the innocence and childlike quality of the disciples of Christ. My youth calls with a loud voice to the new youth of the world. The same sorrow, even though lacerating and consuming each hour, has not weakened my spirit, it has not extinguished the flame of my youth nor the star of my hope.

Now I have become a burning funeral pyre of love and sorrow that blazes on this lofty pinnacle that challenged the vain tumult of millenniums. It consumes me without destroying me, I am tortured but at the same time in ecstasy. From the flames of this stake I send you this prayer that God Himself dictates to me: Unite to form upon this earth the perfect body of His Beloved Son, and you will be saved forever. Either be restored brothers in the faith of the Risen One, or embrace the enemies who will cast you down into the black abyss of nothingness.

God knows how much I have prayed and do pray that your choice may be that which He desires. I live only for this hope, and with this hope in my soul I will die. And even after life I will love you as I love you now, for I too am a man and know your miserable existence, I yearn for your future happiness. I wish I could look into the eyes of each of you, shake hands with each one, hold you to my breast, one after another, so that you would feel the fire that devours me, the throb of my

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heart. But since such a miracle is not conceded to a too human being such as I am, I beg you to forgive me if my insufficient words bring scarcely a reverberation of that blinding light by which you could become divine.

Pope Celestine VI

Servant of the servants of God

## CHAPTER XVIII

### PRAYER TO GOD

I have spoken to men, to all men, in Thy name.

Now the aged messenger, arriving at the end of his long journey, turns to the Master who sent him.

I have spoken to men, to all men, of Thee and of Thy glory and of Thy love.

Grant now that I may speak to Thee, before my mouth becomes a cavern for worms, in the name of men and of the sorrow which is their glory.

For myself I ask nothing, since in Thee I possess everything.

I do not ask Thee even for death, the only grace which I await, since then I would be the vilest of soldiers: he who begs for a leave in the thick of battle.

Lest I offend Thee, I shall not ask anything even for mankind: for dost Thou not know, far better than I can ever know or say, their needs and dreams?

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And yet if my prayer were offensive to Thee I am certain of Thy forgiveness, since it would be a sin of blindness through the fault of love.

I ask for them not the things that almost always the infinity of their sorrow invokes from Thee.

Do not give them the strength that makes them overbearing and shameless.

Nor the fortune that renders them arrogant servants until the day they are prostrate.

Nor the wealth that infects them and possesses them with the devil.

Nor do I seek joy for them, since Thou hast deposited it in every pore of the earth, and if they would desire it and know how to search for it, they would be surrounded with consolations.

Nor do I invoke Thy mercy, for if Thou hadst not shed it and poured it forth so abundantly men would have had no way of return.

Thou hast loved them as only a God in His infinitude can love.

Thou hast loved them even to the point of wishing to be put to death by them, so that Thy blood might satisfy the demented fury which sets brothers against brothers; so that in that fountain of divine love every stain of hate might be washed away.

THE LETTERS OF POPE CELESTINE VI

Still my wound is such that I am not content even with that infinite love.

Beyond infinity the human mind cannot go, nor can it even imagine it.

But is that which is impossible to our imprisoned, vulnerable spirit, impossible to Thy pity?

In the name of Thine infinite mercy I appeal for a second infinity of love, for an overflow and exuberance of Thy boundless and incommensurable love.

If this my appeal is madness I am not ashamed to be mad, for I know that man judges as madness that which in Thine eyes is supreme wisdom.

Thou hast pardoned everything in all men, and yet Thou sayest through me that Thou hast not forgiven enough, that they have need of a last, ineffable supplement of forgiveness.

They have no other claim but their sin, no other rights save their infamies.

But since their faults are infinite and their shames are infinite Thou canst not refuse him who speaks to Thee in their name.

Thou hast forgiven their disobedience, but their rebellion must also be forgiven. Thou hast condoned their ingratitude, but their treachery, too, must be absolved.

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Thou hast excused their denial, but Thou must also forget their betrayal.

Remember how weak they are, think of their misery, consider to what point they are desolate and corrupt. Art Thou, then, not He who created them with Thy will and Thy breath?

Are they not, then, Thy legitimate sons, Thy first-born, restored and redeemed by the death of Thy beloved Son?

Thou hast conceded them their liberty, but from liberty sprang temptation, from temptation the fall, from the fall punishment, from punishment despair, from despair blindness.

Thou hast poured a wine too strong for these too weakened creatures, Thou hast imposed a happiness too divine for too human hearts.

Is it any wonder that they have not known how to bear up, that they have been afraid, that they have sought to fly from Thy face.

Think of the heavy cloak of flesh in which Thou hast encased man's fragile spirit, think of the dark seductions of the blood, of the persevering instigation of the Adversary, of the tardy acidity of condemnation, of the crafty urgings of hardship.

If Thou hadst not created them, they would not suffer as they do suffer.

Suffering itself is one of Thy graces, but all men do not comprehend it nor do they know how to endure it.

## THE LETTERS OF POPE CELESTINE VI

If Thou hadst created them different from what they are, they would not be sunk in the slimy and bloody darkness where they struggle like convulsive serpents with no possession but their poison.

Look upon them, O God, with the tenderness of a father, and not with the severity of a judge.

Look at their faces twisted in terror, hollowed by pain, disfigured by weeping, besmeared with blood still wet.

They wander on the earth like dogs howling in an enchanted desert of the night, like savage beasts that no longer recognize either shelter or pasture, like birds that dash their wings against the rocky walls of caves because they cannot see the light which would lead them out into the sun.

They would have wished to lift themselves up to the skies, but all their wings are clipped; they would have liked to be loved, but most of them know not any word but hate.

Nevertheless they are still Thy sons, although they have abandoned Thee for the acorns of swine; however, there are among them innocent and patient spirits, hearts that desire Thee, seek Thee, and have placed their cause in Thee.

They are like torn and plucked flowers that, though dragged along by the muddy rage of the flood, still float with their degraded blossoms staining the grayness of the waters with red and blue.



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If only for them, Thou shouldst be kind to the lost hordes, the crazed flocks: one single act of desire redeems a thousand sins.

Even this adulterous generation beseeches a sign from Thee; and even though it does not deserve it Thou wilt give it, for Thy pity has always been stronger than Thy justice.

Perhaps my words are blasphemies and only wild dreams, but Thou knowest that they spring from that love of my brothers which Thou Thyself ordained and hast instilled in me.

My frenzy has a justification which Thou canst not refuse: the unendurable misery of Thy sons.

Thou hast not abandoned them, never left them alone: this I know.

Thy revelation was perennial in the voices of prophets and poets, even if it was understood and grasped only by a few or quickly forgotten.

Thine incarnation restored to men their squandered inheritance, it opened up to them the road of sorrow which is joy, return, and ascent.

Despite all, I do not believe that Thy mercy is exhausted, that Thy love has reached its limit.

Men still have need of Thee, and since they can be saved only by the impossible and since nothing is impossible to Thy omnipotence, I beseech even the impossible in their name.

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For the love of the disobedient and ungrateful men, Thou wast hung upon the cross, but today there is not a man who is not nailed and lacerated upon a cross made with his own hands or with those of his enemies.

Men put Thee to death because Thou wished to be killed, but now the entire human race is about to kill itself and Thou dost not wish nor canst Thou wish that mankind commit suicide.

The drama that had the *Fiat* for its prologue has arrived at that dénouement that precedes the avalanche of horror.

It can be dissolved and resolved only by divine intervention, by Thine unimaginable but inconfutable intervention.

Every light is out, or about to be extinguished. The dense fog of the inferno has invaded and covered the lower regions of the firmament.

Thy lightning flash alone can overcome and disperse it, because mankind, no longer perceiving the light from above, knows only to scrape amongst the ashes and hide itself in caves.

What this Thy new intervention in human affairs might be I do not know how to imagine, and even if I did conceive it I would not breathe it, even to myself.

But I can confess to Thee, while I already hear the spades breaking the ground for my grave, that I await from Thee a last and extreme proof of Thy limitless paternal love.

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I await from Thee a still greater madness than that which met human eyes on the mount of Golgotha.

With an importunate impatience which frightens me, I await Thine unforeseen return, Thy victorious descent.

Hast Thou not promised with Thine infallible word the coming of a Consoler?

What moment in human history felt the urgency of consolation as much as this one?

Man tortures and is tortured, he is lacerated and lacerates himself, and in his turn has become that which Thy prophet recognized as the man of sorrows.

Sorrow is his law, his career, and his hope, but few realize it and few have the strength to absorb it in its redemptive fullness.

Man alone today cannot save himself; he is filled with the terror of being abandoned and is on the point of abandoning himself.

Have pity on him; grant that he be no longer beyond the veil which hides Thy effulgence from his eyes.

Enormous were men's faults, but have they not endured enough? Have they not withstood, wept, suffered, and agonized enough?

The fire of armed hate has already descended upon them from the lower skies, destroying them.

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Now grant that there may descend upon them, more than ever, the saving fire of Thy love.

I ask for them only that it be fire, the fire of love, and that it may rain more abundantly than the waters of the ancient punishment.

Let loose the cataracts of fire, as Thou once let loose the floods of waters from the clouds.

Thy language has always been one of fire, Thy message was ever written with fire.

In the midst of a burning bush Moses received Thy law; the sacrifices on his first altars were consumed by fire.

The brilliant light of the Transfiguration was only the fire of Thy divine spirit made visible to the three amazed apostles.

The precursor promised that Thy baptism would be of fire; sparks of fire descended upon the bowed heads of Thine apostles before they scattered to East and West.

Flame of love, I beseech Thee for that fire which Thou alone canst give, floods of fire for the men who are cold, gelid, frozen icy, and petrified.

Immaterial and spiritual fire to purify these infected ones, to inflame these icy souls, to resuscitate these dead bodies.

Intense fire to render hearts more malleable, the fire of truth that will rekindle minds, the fire of madness that will consume the

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stubborn wisdom of the world, the fire of sorrow destined to subliminate itself in a new power of liberation and joy.

What am I, then, before Thee on the face of this earth but a confused tangle of ashes and torment?

What else am I but a beggar who moans at the last lighted door, and lives only in the certainty that once again that door will be unlocked for all, through the intercession of his weeping?

Although the least of the survivors, I dare to beg of Thee, the Father, the austerity of the Ancient Pact; of Thee, the Son, the love of the Joyful Annunciation; of Thee, the Holy Ghost, the consolation of the final salvation.

To me now henceforth there remains only the repose of silence and the tomb.

My heart has unburdened itself of all the words with which it has been filled by the throbbing passion of our days.

If Christ is not wrathful against His Vicar, grant that He may allow him to seal these words, if necessary, with his blood.

Pope Celestine VI

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